

## A Different Beginning by Breanie

**Summary: \*\*\*2007 and 2006 Dumbledore Silver Trinket Award Winner\*\*\***

This is the story of what happened to Harry if he didnt live his life at the Dursleys but with his father? Where was his mother? Why was it different? How much would be the same? And how much would be different? How many surprises will greet him along the way?

**Rating:** R ★★★★★

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**Characters:** None

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**Warnings:** None

**Challenges:** None

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## **Chapter 1: The Beginning**

**Author's Notes:** I hope you guys approve as i decided to make this a story story not a one shot! i dont own the characters and all the jazz i just play with them - JKR rocks!! Please review!! newly edited! hey everyone i just got a beta so im re-editing this story with help - u rock!!:D

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### **Chapter I – The Beginning**

***11th January, 1980 ...***

James Potter stepped into the kitchen of Potter Manor, yawning as he rubbed a hand over the rough stubble on his face. He hadn't shaved in three days and it was starting to get annoying and slightly itchy. This seemed to be the way it always happened. He would get too lazy to shave, decide to grow a beard, and shave it off after a few days when it got to be really annoying.

He grinned when he saw the beautiful redhead sitting at the table in the kitchen, chatting absently with one of the Potter's long time house elves, Maddy.

He still couldn't believe that he had actually married Lily Evans! After everything that he had done to try to get a hold of her at school, she was finally his. He loved her more than anything in the world. Her hair was a gorgeous auburn colour that actually had hints of chestnut in it when it hit the light. Lily had told him that he was probably the only person to notice such a silly thing about her hair; but he didn't care. He had spent hours staring at her hair during classes all of the time when they had been in school. But it was her eyes that had done him in ... emerald green and almond shaped ... the first time that he had looked into those eyes his first impression had been, 'Wow'. Of course, he hadn't been interested in girls at the time, but he had still been in love with those eyes. Then around thirteen, he had taken one look at Lily Evans and fallen head-over-heels. His heart had simply pooled at his feet ... not that he would admit to something as foolish and lame as that, of course. But that's exactly what had happened.

His best mates, Remus Lupin, Sirius Black and Peter Pettigrew had teased him about it. Especially Sirius, who knew the exact moment that James had fallen for Lily Evans. Lily on the other hand, had found him egotistical, arrogant, self-centered, a bully and ... well, a downright prat. If he was completely honest with himself, she had been exactly right. He had been everything that she had accused him of, and more. She hadn't even given him the time of day until the end of their sixth year at Hogwarts. Then, James had seemed to ... mellow out enough for her taste. In other words, he had grown up which was exactly what Lily had been waiting for. He shook the memories back from his mind and grinned. Merlin, she looked beautiful. But then again, she had always managed to take his breath away.

He walked over and gently placed his lips on her neck. "I missed you."

Lily laughed, turning her head to smile at him. Her smile made him ache in all of the appropriate places. "Mmm, I missed you too,

handsome.”

James smiled, scooped her up out of the chair and kissed her softly. “I’m glad. I had a tough day at work.”

“Why?”

James shrugged, “Lots of paperwork and stuff. I mean, I’m still technically an Auror in training, but with this awful war going on, they’re letting people in like crazy! I mean Alastor basically told me today that I am now a full-time Auror and will be on call twenty-four/seven. However, the first thing that I had to do as a full-time Auror was hours and hours of paperwork! I hate paperwork! It’s like being back in school and getting stuck with hours of homework all over again! It was dreadful!”

Lily smirked and ran her fingers through his messy hair as if hoping to tame it. “Oh, you poor, baby,” she murmured as she covered his face in kisses. “What a hard life you live.”

James nodded and pouted. “I know; hold me.”

Lily slapped him playfully. “Prat.” Then she kissed him again. “And I know exactly what you mean. Alastor told me this morning that I am also no longer in training. He wasn’t too pleased that I took the afternoon off. I think he’s going to have me doing double the amount of work tomorrow because of it.”

“Why did you take the afternoon off? I didn’t get a chance to ask you when you told me that you were leaving,” James asked, carrying his wife into the living room and cuddling her down onto his lap, both of them oblivious to Maddy’s knowing smile as she watched them leave the kitchen completely entranced in each other.

She grinned, her eyes twinkling in delight. “I had to go to St. Mungo’s for an appointment.”

“What for? Are you sick?”

Lily laughed, kissing him softly as her eyes twinkled in mischief now.

"I have been."

James' hazel eyes instantly filled with worry as he held her hands in his. "Why haven't you said anything? Are you alright? Did something happen? Do you need anything? Can I do anything? I could have gone with you. Is it serious? Are you hurting? Are you-?"

"JAMES!"

"What?" He asked with a bewildered look on his face.

Lily smiled. "I'm fine. I just wanted to check on something. We've had a tough year and I thought maybe that I was getting a touch of the flu or something."

James nodded. "Yeah we have. And you're not telling me something. Lily, did something happen? Are you alright? Was it the flu?"

"I know that I'm keeping something from you," Lily replied, snuggling herself comfortably in his lap. "I will tell you, I promise. It's nothing to worry about. James, we've been married for how long now?"

"Four months and ten days."

Lily laughed. "Counting love?"

He grinned. "Always." When she smiled, he brought their joined hands up to his lips. "I've wanted you for years, how could I forget? We married on the first of September, 1979, exactly two months after we graduated from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. I've loved you every single day for at least the last five to six years. The first time I saw you I was eleven years old and I remember looking into your incredible green eyes and just thinking, 'Wow.' I love you, Lily Rose Potter."

She smiled, cupping his face gently in her hands before she kissed him long, slow, and soft. "I love you too, James Andrew Potter. I remember hating myself in school for being so incredibly attracted to you. I just didn't understand how I could be attracted to someone I despised so much. I think I started falling for you around second year.

I cursed myself daily. I remember thinking, *'What is wrong with me? How can I be so attracted to such an irresponsible and immature prat?'* Especially one that caused flocks of girls to just fall at his feet at the smallest little smile; I was so jealous of that. Then I just turned you down because the last thing I wanted was to be another one of James Potter's girls. I was afraid that you would use me and toss me aside. But then you smartened up and became the wonderful man that you are now, even though you still have a bit of that prat in you. But I know that it's part of who you are and well, frankly, I've always loved that mischief maker side to you. I love you."

He grinned and kissed her softly. "I always knew that you couldn't resist me."

Lily rolled her eyes, a half-smirk/half-smile on her face. "Ego, James, ego."

He laughed. "Yeah, but you love me."

Lily smiled at him. "Yes, I love you. We've been through so much, James. Our lives have hardly been easy. We grew up during a time of war and we're still living it. It seems like our happiness is the rainbow during a storm of tragedies. Two weeks after our wedding my parents were murdered by a group of Death Eaters and on Halloween your parents were murdered by Lord Voldemort himself. Ever since my parents were killed, Petunia has distanced herself from me more and more and then she married Vernon and she's not talking to me anymore at all. She wants nothing more to do with me and nothing to do with the magical community," Lily explained as she stood up and began to pace back and forth as she was speaking. "Her husband is ..." she shuddered for a moment, a frown coming over her face. "Vernon is a horrid man, but she loves him for some unknown reason! And all of this can be blamed on Voldemort and this stupid war. Her distance from me, her only remaining family, is all because I'm a witch. Our parents never would have been killed otherwise. I know it and she resents me because she knows it too. They were just muggles, ordinary muggles living their day-to-day lives. But now they're gone and through circumstances beyond my control, I've lost Petunia as well," Lily stated as she threw her hands up in the air. She took a deep breath and began pacing again.

"It's not only you and I that are suffering, James. Remus' transformations are getting worse now that he is fully becoming a man and has to suffer the brunt of an adult transformation. If we didn't drag him back to us every once and a while when his transformation gets a little too much out of control I think that he would be lost and that he might even go into a state of depression. He is suffering more than anyone at the moment. With all of the werewolf laws being discussed ... his life could get a lot harder. The war is only making things worse. He doesn't let anyone in. If a woman starts to get too close, he runs for the hills, breaking things off before he gives himself a chance. I worry about him and he needs us more than he realizes. Sirius is ... well, playing the field, I suppose. He's very wild and I don't think that he has a clue about what he wants to do when he grows up. But I don't worry about Sirius too much. He can take care of himself. Peter's father was killed and now he's struggling to make ends-meet so that he can support his mother. We've both become instant Aurors without all of the proper training, which we only get during our spare time."

Tears began to fall from Lily's eyes and down her cheeks. "We're not the only ones who have been forced into this Auror job faster than normal. Remus and Sirius have, and I know a few others have, as well. Everyone we know is in the Order and none of us are really safe. The war has intensified and people are dying. I feel like we haven't had a shred of happiness in our lives, until now and I feel like happiness will never truly return as long as Voldemort is out there. I know I'm rambling, James, but ... how can we be so happy during such terrible times?" Lily sat down next to James as she finished, dropping her hands into her lap.

James nodded, taking her hands in his. "Lily, we have each other. This war has taken a toll on all of us and on those we love, but we have each other and that's important. We can be happy. We're only eighteen, love, and we are happily married. Even with this war going on we're working to be happy, that's all we can really do."

Lily nodded and bit her bottom lip as she slid her fingers into her husband's hair. "I know and I know something that's going to make us even happier."



“What’s that?” James asked, grinning at the smile that his wife had on her face.

“I’m pregnant.”

“You-really?”

Lily laughed. “Yup, I’m due at the end of July. And guess what? Alice and Frank just found out that they’re having a baby around the same time. Alice was at the hospital today too. Our babies can be playmates together.”

James grinned, laughing as he covered his wife’s face in kisses. “I’m going to be a Da?”

“Yup.”

“That’s wonderful! So that’s why you went to St. Mungo’s! Are you alright? Do you feel okay? Do you want me get you something? My Da always said that my Mum wanted crackers and cheese when she was pregnant with me. And I think I heard something about weird cravings as well. Cravings like peanut butter and shrimp or chocolate covered pickles – you don’t want anything like that do you? You need to rest or sleep or something.”

Lily grinned. “No, James ... I want you.”

He smiled, scooping her up into his arms as he kissed her deeply, sliding his hands up into her hair. “I love you, my Lily Rose.”

Lily smiled up at him. “I love you too, Jamie.”

Then she laughed when he Disapparated, appearing in the master bedroom and dropping her down onto the bed with a wicked grin on his face. “Let me show you how much.”

She grinned, sliding her hands up the shirt that he wore and over his lean muscles. “I was hoping that you would say that.” Then she crushed her lips to his and surrendered herself willingly to his touch.

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James couldn't wait to tell Sirius, Remus, and Peter that he and Lily were having a baby. They would be so surprised. His best friends were all that he had left in the world. Andrew and Gwendolynn Potter's death had left a huge hole in his heart that no one had been able to fix. But he knew that he wasn't the only one who was hurting. His parents had treated Sirius like a son as well. James knew that their death had hurt Sirius just as much as it had hurt him. His friends had been there for him as best as they could, as had Lily. But with so much death going on around them even that small comfort had been hard to accept. The good news that he planned to share would be exactly what all of them needed. He couldn't wait to see their faces.

He was almost bursting with eagerness by the time that the three of them made their way into the kitchen at Potter Manor. Sirius grabbed a chair, flipping it around so that he could straddle it as he ran his fingers through his dark locks, reaching for the slice of peach pie that Maddy and Mickey had made and put on the table for them.

"So, how's it hanging, Prongs?" He asked as he grabbed a fork and took a bite of peach pie, moaning in pleasure at one of his favourite treats.

Maddy and Mickey knew that Sirius loved peach pie and every once and a while they would make it for him when he came over. Especially now that he and Remus were sharing a flat in the city; Maddy knew that they didn't eat proper meals as neither one of them knew how to cook. Maddy seemed to be pleased with Remus though who was at least trying to learn, unlike Sirius. The house elves always tried to cook especially large meals when the Marauders were present and also because they ate so much. They had been doing this since the first time Sirius and Remus had arrived at Potter Manor when they were twelve years old.

James laughed. "Pretty good, how about you?"

Sirius shrugged. "Same I guess. Alastor told me that I'm a full-time Auror now, but I heard that he told the same thing to you, Lily, and

Moony so no BFD there.”

Remus nodded. “Yes, Alastor said that training has pretty much stopped for a while. They are in desperate need for Aurors to round up these Death Eaters. No one is really even sure what move Voldemort is going to throw at us next. Everyone is needed and there are no exceptions.”

Peter nodded vigorously. “Very true.”

James nodded. “Yeah well, the last I heard he planned to unite the purebloods. He wants his immediate circle of Death Eaters to be purebloods only.”

Sirius looked disgusted as he helped himself to a second piece of pie. “Don’t remind me! It’s bad enough that Reggie signed right on up and my dear mother and father think that he is the proper son for doing so, you know, really living up to our pureblood name! You know how crazy they are! Not that it did him any good of course. He chickened out and ended up dead. I don’t think Kreacher managed to get the bloodstains out of the bed yet.” He sighed as he thought sadly, yet fondly of his younger brother. He had been much too young to die. “Besides, I found out that the whole pureblood thing isn’t even an option. Yeah, I mean he prefers purebloods but he’ll let in any piece of shit that wants to help him, half-blood or muggle-born. He wants to take over the world or some dumb shite like that.”

Remus sighed. “I’ve never understood that. Taking over the world, I mean, it all just seems like nothing but one big head ache to me.”

Peter nodded. “Yeah, a head ache. I’m glad that I decided not to be an Auror. The Department of Magical Transportation is a much safer route. The only thing that I have to worry about is an unauthorized portkey.”

James grinned. “Wormtail does have a point.”

Lily stepped into the kitchen then. “Hello Marauders, been causing trouble lately?”

Sirius grinned. "Always, Lily-Love, always. Come and give me a kiss."

Lily laughed as she walked around to kiss each of them on the cheek. She laughed when both Sirius and Remus kissed her softly on the mouth. Peter kissed her chastely on the cheek, his face flushing red as he looked over at James as if he was afraid to be yelled at. When she got to James he turned his head so that he could catch her mouth giving her a long, soft kiss, causing Sirius to whistle. Lily grinned as she pulled away. "James and I have some news to tell you."

Remus grinned. "Oh yeah, good or bad?"

"Good, Moony, very good." James replied, grinning from ear to ear.

Sirius grinned, slapping his hands together in anticipation. "Well, don't keep us in suspense! What's this good news, Lily-Love? Let me guess. You've finally decided to leave James and marry me?"

James rolled his eyes and kissed the nape of his wife's neck. "Hardly."

Sirius grinned. "Okay I give, what's the news?"

Remus nodded. "Yeah, good news isn't something we hear too often any more so don't keep us waiting."

James slipped his arms around Lily's waist, holding her back against him and placing his hands on her stomach as they smiled at their friends. "Lily and I are having a baby."

Sirius whooped, jumping out of his chair to scoop Lily up into his arms. "Damn, Prongs, you work fast! Haven't even been married a year and you've already knocked her up!"

"I take offence to the term being knocked up." Lily replied, though she couldn't quite suppress the grin from forming on her face as Sirius kissed Lily's cheeks and then her mouth in a loud smacking kiss before passing her onto Remus.

"Give me my wife!" James said, grinning as he watched Remus kiss her and hug her in the same fashion as Sirius had before passing her off to Peter. Peter gave her cheek another small peck before he passed her back to James. He had always been less exuberant around Lily than Sirius and Remus had been.

Remus grinned as he helped himself to a bite of the peach pie that Sirius had already eaten half of. "So when are you due?"

"Around the end of July, beginning of August."

Sirius grinned, helping himself to another piece of pie. "Isn't that about the time that Frank and Alice are having their baby as well?"

Lily nodded. "Yeah, around there."

James grinned. "I'm going to be a Da!"

"Man Lily, an irresponsible prat like that as a father ... I think that you should marry me, we'll run away to Tahiti! It will be great!" Sirius replied wiggling his eyebrows suggestively and grinning when Lily laughed and kissed his cheek again.

Remus snorted. "And like you're more responsible than James?"

Sirius looked offended. "Hey! I could be."

Lily grinned. "I know that James is an irresponsible prat but I love him." Lily replied, causing James to frown and go, 'Hey!'

Remus laughed. "You'll both be great parents! Have you thought of any names yet?"

James shrugged. "I haven't actually. Have you, Lily?"

Lily shook her head. "No, not yet, but we've got lots of time. I'm only three months along. James, didn't you want to do something else tonight as well?"

James looked at his wife quizzically for a moment and then he

nodded. "Oh yeah, um ... Sirius, we were sort of ... well, wondering actually ... that maybe when this baby is ... well, would you like ... well, since you're my best mate and all and you see it goes like ... I mean, I've known all of you forever but you've been my best mate since we were what eight years old, which is three years longer than I've known Moony or Wormtail ... so I was wondering if you ... well, it's like this, you see –"

"Oh for heaven's sake, James!" Lily said, rolling her eyes at her husband. "Just spit it out! Sirius, we would like for you to be the godfather of our first baby."

Sirius looked up in surprise, his eyes darting down to the still flat stomach of his friend. He blinked, surprised to find unfamiliar moisture behind his eyes and then he grinned. "I'd be honoured."

James grinned and embraced his friend. "Brilliant! So now that that's taken care of, and now that Padfoot has eaten half of the peach pie, are you guys ready for dinner?"

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### ***25th June, 1980 ...***

James knocked hesitantly on the office door of the Headmaster of Hogwarts as he held Lily's hand tightly in his. That morning he had received an urgent owl from Albus Dumbledore demanding that he and Lily arrive at his office as soon as possible. When he heard him call out for them to come in, he stepped inside, smiling when he saw the familiar old face behind his half-moon spectacles and the twinkling blue eyes.

"Good evening, James, Lily, thank you for coming." Dumbledore said quietly.

James nodded. "We came as soon as we could. What's going on? Your owl said that it was urgent, Professor."

Dumbledore sighed. "I haven't been your professor for many months now, please call me Albus."

Lily nodded as they both took a seat in front of the large desk. "Did something happen to someone from the Order, Prof – I mean Albus?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, nothing like that. Something a bit more ... alarming I'm afraid."

"Alarming?" James asked. "That concerns the two of us?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes, alarming. I think that it would be best if I started from the beginning." He paused for a moment to gaze sadly at the young couple in front of him. They were holding hands and Lily was hugely pregnant with their first child. He wished deeply that he didn't have to tell them this. He just wanted them to be happy and not have to worry about the war outside. But unfortunately, everyone in the magical community was worried about the war and it was affecting everyone in some way. He closed his eyes as he remembered those members that the Order itself had already lost: Andrew and Gwendolynn Potter, Marlene McKinnon, Benjy Fenwick, Edgar Bones, Gideon and Fabian Prewett, and Dorcas Meadowes. The last thing any of them needed was more bad news.

"Albus, what's going on?" James asked.

Dumbledore sighed. "A few months ago, I was down at the Hogs Head interviewing a woman by the name of Sybil Trelawney. I was looking to fill in the spot for a new Divination teacher at Hogwarts. I myself have never much liked or trusted the subject. But Sybil is the granddaughter of the famous seer, Cassandra Trelawney. So, naturally I thought that she deserved a chance and well, the subject should be offered to those who might be interested in it. I realized almost immediately that she was a fraud. However, just as I was leaving the room her eyes frosted over and she went into this trance-like state that was very frighteningly real. She then proceeded to give a real prophecy. Again, the prophecy alarmed me of course but I didn't know what to do about it or whom it may have applied too, though I did have my suspicions at the time. Anyway, we were interrupted by a Death Eater who was outside of the door, listening in. He was caught before Trelawney finished her prediction but he told Voldemort what he had heard. Voldemort has decided to act

immediately and accordingly even though he has not heard the prophecy in its entirety. The part of the prophecy that he did hear scared or worried him enough to have him deciding to act on it. This Death Eater, when informed of Voldemort's plans was not ... impressed, I suppose is the word, and he wished to help. He came to me and explained what Voldemort plans to do. He changed sides, quickly and effectively. He has now turned spy for our side and the first thing that he wants to do is prevent Voldemort from doing what he plans to do in regards to the prophecy. It was then that I realized something had to be done about it immediately." He glanced at them again before speaking. "I think that it is time that you both heard the prophecy."

He put his wand to his head, pulling out a thread of silvery substance before he dropped it into the basin before him. A figure with owlish eyes, draped in shawls, rose above it and began to speak:

*"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches ... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives ... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies..."*

The Potters stared at Dumbledore for a long-time. Finally, Lily spoke up. "What does this mean, Albus?"

Dumbledore sighed. "It means that a child will be born at the end of July to a couple who have three times defied Lord Voldemort. Lily, James ... you twice defied him when he murdered each of your parents, both of you were meant to be with them at both of those times, that's twice defied because you both escaped. Then, two weeks after the death of Andrew and Gwendolynn Potter, Voldemort attacked both of you in a muggle town, asking you to turn against me and to become his followers. You denied him, and he again tried to kill you, but you escaped because members of the Order showed up in time. That means that between the two of you, you have three times defied him and escaped a terrible death. Lily, you are due with



your baby at the end of the seventh month. However, what is interesting is that there is another couple who has thrice defied him and are having a baby around the exact same time.”

James gulped, “The Longbottoms.”

Dumbledore nodded. “Yes, James, Frank and Alice Longbottom are having a baby as well. The Death Eater that has turned spy for us however has informed me that Voldemort does not believe that the Longbottoms’ child is the one who will defeat him. He plans to instead, go after yours.”

Lily let out a sob before she could stop herself, clutching James’ hand so tightly that he winced, wondering if it was possible to break every single bone in his hand from a firm grip. “Our baby? He knows we’re having a baby and he wants ... he wants to kill him??? Why? An innocent baby?!”

James nodded, moving closer so that he could hold his wife in his arms. She was sobbing uncontrollably now, her hand sitting in a protective gesture over her large stomach. He rubbed her back and kissed her cheeks, knowing that her tears were as much from her fear as they were from her hormones.

“Albus, can you explain that prophecy? If he has chosen us ... then...”

“You’re both thinking the same thing. He believes that it will be your child that will have the power to defeat him. Therefore, he wants to kill him before he has a chance to grow up and obtain such powers. Which is why I am going to insist on doing the Fidelius Charm on both of you.”

James stood up now, his hands clutched tightly into fists at his sides. “You want us to hide? I’m not going to hide from that bastard! I’m not going to let him touch my baby or my wife!”

“James! Listen to me! You know how dangerous Voldemort is! He wants your child dead! You know the power that he has and there is no way that your baby will have the power to defeat him so young! He

or she must grow into the power! Voldemort doesn't plan to allow that to happen! The Fidelius Charm is not necessarily hiding!"

Lily nodded. "It's when only the few select people who you tell know where and how to find you."

James sat down, anger still flashing in his hazel eyes causing them to turn the colour of smoke. "Where do you want us to go? Potter Manor is safe! My parents and grandparents and my entire family have placed so many protective wards and security around it. No one can get in who isn't allowed."

Dumbledore shook his head sadly. "James, Voldemort is a powerfully dangerous wizard. If he wanted to, he could find it and get in ... unplottable or not. I don't think Glasgow Hall is the place for you. I think that you should find some property and move into a house. We will then place the charm on you and put up the proper wards. I will be your Secret Keeper and no one will find you. Voldemort will not get to you or your child."

"We appreciate the offer, but Sirius will be our Secret Keeper, Albus."

Lily nodded. "Yes."

Dumbledore sighed. "James, Lily, you know that I believe that we have a spy in our midst, someone in the Order is passing on our information to Voldemort. I'm not saying that it is Sirius but because we don't know ... I don't think that you should use Sirius Black, you –"

James stood up again, his anger evident clearly in his eyes as they had turned the colour of smoke. "Sirius is not that person! I would trust him with my life! I do trust him with my life! He would lay down his life for me, Lily, and our child!"

Lily nodded. "He would, Albus, Sirius is a wonderful person! We trust him completely."

Dumbledore shook his head sadly. "You're sure?"

James nodded. "One hundred and ten percent."

Dumbledore nodded, though the twinkle was gone from his bright blue eyes. "Alright then I suggest that you find a house. I want you both in hiding by the end of the week and I want the charm performed. I also want you both to promise me that you will not tell a single other soul about this prophecy or why you are going into hiding. Just say that Voldemort is coming after you, not your baby."

James and Lily both stood up. "We'll do it, Albus."

Lily smiled. "We would die to protect our baby."

Dumbledore smiled at them then but the smile didn't reach his eyes. He hoped to Merlin that it wouldn't come to that. "Good luck both of you, and Godspeed."

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When they arrived back at Potter Manor, James immediately floored Sirius, Remus and Peter and asked them to come to the Hall. When they arrived, he looked pained as he spoke.

"Lily and I have just come from Dumbledore's office. There has been some kind of ... Voldemort wants to kill ... us. We can't and we won't get into the details as we promised Dumbledore that we wouldn't, but we need to do the Fidelius Charm." James replied.

Lily nodded. "Sirius, James and I both would like for you to be the Secret Keeper. We trust you with our lives and with our baby's life."

Sirius stood up; he, Remus, and Peter had paled considerably upon hearing this news. "Of course I'll do it. I'll do anything to protect you guys. When will the charm be performed?"

James nodded. "Thank you. I think that I know of a place where we can hide and then do the charm. We'll do it tomorrow night. I'll owl you with the location."

Sirius nodded. "Alright." He pulled James into a hug. "Take care of your family, Prongs. I'd die to save them."

James hugged his friend back, tears in his eyes. "I know, Padfoot, I know."

Lily and Remus slid into the hug as well, tears pouring down their cheeks. None of them noticed when Peter slipped silently out of the house without a word as tears poured down his pale cheeks.

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That evening, James lay in the huge featherbed with his wife curled up around him. He couldn't believe that he was going to be leaving Potter Manor. He couldn't believe that his child fell under a prophecy to one day kill Voldemort or be killed by him. He closed his eyes and thought of the power that flowed through his veins. It was strong and he knew it, but why would his child be more powerful or be the one to destroy Voldemort in the end? After all, the blood and the power wouldn't be as strong as it was in James because Lily was muggleborn. Unless Lily had something in her as well that she had never known about? But then again, Lily was an extremely powerful witch herself and he had no idea how it would all affect their baby and the final outcome? He didn't even know what to think anymore. His powers were strong but the powers of his child would obviously be much stronger when the time came. There was no other explanation available.

He turned to look at his wife as she slid a hand over his heart and kneaded softly. "Lily?"

"I'm scared, James."

He nodded, turning on his side so that he could face her. He placed one hand over hers where it was resting on his chest and the other over her large stomach. "I know. I'm scared too. I love you."

She kissed him softly. "What were you just thinking about?"

"The prophecy and the power that I possess. I was wondering why our baby would one day have the power to destroy Voldemort, and why I don't have it. The power that he gets from me can't be any

stronger than what I have now, right? I mean, I know that there is still so much for me to learn and to understand before I'm truly at my potential and before I really step into my powers, but still ... will he be more powerful? Why our baby?" James asked.

Lily shook her head. "I don't know. I think that means he or she will be even more powerful. I may be muggleborn, but I'm a pretty powerful witch, Jamie."

James nodded. "That is true." He was quiet for a few minutes before he spoke again. "I just hope that all of this is over soon. I'm tired of living in fear."

Lily nodded and snuggled closer. "Me too."

He kissed her softly and held her closely in his arms, keeping one hand in a protective gesture on her stomach. He wasn't going to let anything happen to this baby. Power or no power, Voldemort was evil and extremely powerful and James knew that this prophecy had declared that he couldn't stop him; but it didn't mean that he couldn't try.

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The next evening, James and Lily stood nervously in the Potter cottage in Godric's Hollow. The cottage hadn't been used in over fifty years and badly needed some new decorations as well as repair work. It was the only place that James could think of using. No one knew that he owned it so he thought that it was perfect. He turned at the knock on the door and let Sirius in.

"Are you ready?"

Sirius nodded. "This is a good spot, James."

"Thanks. Lily is going to perform the charm. With Charms as her best subject, she's pretty sure that she can manage to put the charm on herself as well." James explained.

"Listen, James, I was doing some serious thinking last night." Sirius

replied. "You know that I'm honoured to be your Secret Keeper, but I was thinking about -"

"Backing down?" James asked, anger flashing in his eyes.

Sirius shook his head. "No, not backing down. I was thinking that it's obvious that you would choose me to fill this position. Voldemort will know right away and come after me. We all know it. I won't break, you know that I would never betray you ... but I was thinking ... what if we don't use me and throw him off the trail?"

Lily looked at Sirius curiously. "Throw him off the trail? Like send him after you, to torture you, to try to kill you for information that you don't even have? Are you bloody insane?"

"No! Lily, think about it. You know that I wouldn't tell him, but by only pretending it to be me I wouldn't break, he could torture me for hours but because I wouldn't actually be the Secret Keeper; I would never tell him where you were."

James looked at Sirius in silence for a few moments before speaking. "That actually makes a lot of sense. But that's an extra, unnecessary danger to put you in, Padfoot."

Sirius nodded. "I know. But it would keep you guys safe, guaranteed. That's the only important thing."

"Who are you suggesting to fill your place?" Lily asked, rubbing her hand in slow circles along her lower back. She was sore from the extra weight that she was carrying around in front of her.

"Wormtail."

James looked surprised and then he grinned, understanding where his best mate was coming from. "Perfect!"

"Peter?" Lily asked. "Why is he perfect? No offence towards him, but he's not that powerful magically and he ... he needs protection! He can barely make decisions for himself. He looks up to you guys; he is not the right person for this job."

Sirius nodded. "Exactly! I would watch out for him, make sure that he's in hiding as well. But think about it, no one would ever suspect him! Why would the two of you pick such a weak pathetic rat like Wormtail to be your Secret Keeper? Do you see the brilliance of it? No one would ever suspect it."

"Peter is not a 'weak pathetic rat', he is your friend." Lily replied, glaring at Sirius.

James shrugged. "He's our friend, Lily, but it's the truth! You said so yourself, he's not that powerful magically and he needs protection. No one would ever suspect Peter! Sirius would be the logical choice and Voldemort would understand that. And after Sirius, Remus would be next in line, not Peter! Sirius, it's a brilliant plan. I completely agree with you! Only the four of us, then, will know that Peter is the Secret Keeper. We must keep this between us and us only. Can you go get Wormtail, Sirius?"

He nodded. "Yeah, I'll be right back." He Disapparated and Lily turned to her husband.

"We're not going to tell Remus?"

James shook his head. "Remus will, of course, know where to find us, but no. You know I trust him, but Dumbledore was right, the fewer people who know, the better. And I don't think that anyone, other than those involved, should know who the Secret Keeper is."

"But you told everyone last night? I mean, you asked Sirius to be our Secret Keeper right in front of Remus and Peter." Lily replied.

James nodded. "I know I did. But still, Lily, the fewer people who know, the better. I trust Remus with my life but Dumbledore was right about that. Don't you agree, love?"

Lily sighed. She understood where her husband was going with it but the nerves of what they were doing were still there, floating through her system. "Yes I do."

Sirius and Peter Apparated into the house a moment later. Peter was looking around curiously before he finally said, "Hello James, Lily."

"Hi Peter." Lily said, smiling warmly at him. She had always slightly pitied him in school but now she knew that he was a very nice man, even if he always did seem to need protection and had been acting nervously for a while. But then again, for as long as she had known him he had been the type to constantly be looking over his shoulder and to be a bit of a nervous boy. It was obviously a vital piece of his personality, which probably explained why he looked up to and admired James, Sirius, and Remus so much.

James nodded. "Listen Wormtail, change of plans, would you be our Secret Keeper? Promise to defend us from Voldemort at all cost?"

Peter flinched at the sound of the name, causing James and Sirius to roll their eyes. "Me? You want ... oh boy ... I ... yes I ... I would be honoured."

Lily smiled. "Thank you, Peter, our lives are in your hands now."

Sirius nodded. "I'll do the charm now, Lily." When she nodded, he quickly placed the three of them together and performed the charm.

James grinned. "Okay, let's see if this works. Sirius, where do Lily and I live?"

Sirius grinned. "Oh that's easy you guys live at ... I know this ... I'm standing in your house aren't I?" He asked, almost to himself now as he looked around in confusion.

Lily laughed. "It worked. Peter, tell him where we are."

"And us," James added. "As I don't even seem to know where we are."

Peter nodded. "Number 19 Flower Lane, Godric's Hollow."

James nodded, gulping as he pulled his wife closer. "Yeah, it



worked.” Now all he had to do was hope that Voldemort never got near his wife and their unborn child.

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## Chapter 2: The Prophecy

**Author's Notes:** please review!!!! newly edited

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### Chapter II – The Prophecy

***31st July, 1980 ...***

Lily stood in front of the stove in the kitchen at Godric's Hollow carefully stirring the pasta sauce that she was making for dinner. Her back ached and her feet ached and her entire body was aching really. She was also getting small cramps in her stomach, every twenty minutes or so. They had been coming and going all day. She had wondered briefly if maybe she was going into labour but had decided to wait a bit and see as the pain hadn't really been that intense yet. She didn't want to alarm James, in case it was a false alarm.

She smiled at Sirius as he stepped into the kitchen. “Hey, Handsome. Are you here to try to mooch some dinner?”

Sirius grinned. “Aw, Lily-Love, you know that I only come here to see you! You are the one true love of my life.”

She laughed and kissed his cheek. “Liar. So how's Arlene?”

“Arlene?” Sirius asked as if puzzled for a moment.

Lily nodded. “Yeah Arlene, that pretty brunette you were dating last week?”

Sirius grinned. “Ohhh Arlene... she's good I guess. Now I'm with Monica.”

Lily rolled her eyes. "Do you ever change?"

He grinned. "Why would I want to tie myself down like Prongs did? Come now, Lily-Love, I'm not the commitment type."

"So I noticed. How many hearts have you broken in the last month?"

"I don't break hearts, don't even bruise them!" Sirius replied.

"Uh-huh, well let's see... in the last month alone I recall you being with Beth, Louisa, Janet, Dana, Arlene, and now Monica. You break hearts, Sirius." Lily replied, patting him on the cheek.

He grinned. "Nah, I'm very careful about it. And you forgot about Diana."

Lily sighed as she shook her head at him. He was never going to change. He had always been a player, and she wondered how long it would be until he met the woman that he could stand for longer than a week. "Yeah, so how was your day?"

He shrugged. "Same old, same old. Alastor had us practice some hunting thing today. You know, if we are hot on the trail of a Death Eater, we know how to track them. It was pretty dull."

Lily smiled. "Sounds like it might have been interesting." She placed a hand on her stomach as another cramp shot through her. "Sirius, where's James at?"

"He was just going upstairs to change. You see, one of the programs was that we were in a forested area and with all the rain we've had lately it was little muddy. Prongs fell in the mud a bit... okay, I might have pushed him but it was all in good fun." Sirius replied with a grin. "Why?"

She gulped. "Well, because I think I might be – God!" She exclaimed as she felt the liquid pour down her legs.

Sirius paled considerably. "Oh, um... er... that's not good."

Lily rolled her eyes. "I didn't wet myself, you prat! My water just broke!"

"Oh... is that good?"

Lily smacked his arm. "I'm going into labour!" When he continued to stare at her dumbfounded she slapped his arm. "I'm having the baby!"

Sirius' jaw dropped open. "Now?"

"Not this very second but I need to get to St. Mungo's!"

"Well, I – okay... JAMES!" He yelled as he hurried to the kitchen doorway.

Lily rolled her eyes. "You're not helping!" she yelled.

"JAMES! GET DOWN HERE QUICK! LILY NEEDS YOU!" Sirius bellowed. He glanced over at Lily again, his face pale before he turned back towards the stairs. "PRONGS!"

James bolted into the kitchen seconds later. "Lily? What's up? God! What happened?" He asked as he stared at the mess on the kitchen floor, a horrified look in his eyes.

Lily cleaned it up with a quick charm silently cursing men and their stupidity. "James, I think I'm having the baby."

James paled. "Now?"

"JUST GET ME TO ST. MUNGO'S!" She shrieked.

James nodded. "Sirius, get Lily's bag and tell Remus and Peter. Meet us at the hospital." He grabbed the portkey that they had received for the occasion and quickly pulled her into his arms and they both disappeared.

They appeared in the waiting room and James quickly rushed her over to the front desk. "My... my wife, she's going to have a baby."

The woman rolled her eyes. "So bring her to the maternity ward. Next!"

Lily tugged James along to the proper ward, clutching her stomach as the pain barrelled through her. She was quickly brought to a room and her healer came in to see her.

"How does it look?" James asked with a slightly panicked look on his face.

The healer smiled. "Everything looks good. I think that very soon you will have a healthy baby. Just be patient."

Lily nodded as James only continued to hold Lily's hand extremely pale.

Hours passed and finally the healer told Lily that she could start pushing. James sat behind her, holding both of her hands in his. He yelped out loud when she squeezed so hard that he was sure she broke a bone.

"Oh, you think that hurt, James?" She asked sweetly.

He nodded. "Lil, I think you broke my hand."

Lily nodded. "OH, YOU THINK THAT HURT? WELL, I'M TRYING TO GET A BLOODY PERSON OUT OF ME!!"

James gulped and decided that it was best not to comment. She called him everything under the sun; swore never to make love with him again; promised to hex his bits off at the first opportunity; and threatened to kill him before the red bundle slid out and she sighed in relief. James watched curiously as the healers cleaned the red thing off and then the healer smiled.

"Congratulations, Lord and Lady Potter, you have a son."

James grinned as the healer placed the tiny red baby in his wife's arms. He thought that he looked a bit like a red potato with black hair.

He was all scrunched up and very pink. "We have a son."

Lily nodded as she smiled up at her husband. "We have a son." She kissed James softly. "But what are we going to name him?"

James thought for a moment and then he grinned. "Well... I was thinking that maybe we could name him after your father. I know that you were very close with him. So what about Harold Potter?"

Tears welled up in Lily's eyes. "I'd like that. But not Harold, just Harry. Harry James Potter."

James grinned. "It sounds perfect." He kissed her softly and then he walked towards the door and pulled it open to where Sirius, Remus, and Peter were pacing the hall.

"It's a boy. Come on in and see."

They walked into the room and found Lily sitting on the bed holding the tiny bundle in her arms.

"Guys, I'd like for you to meet the newest Marauder, Harry James Potter." James replied, leaning down to place a tiny kiss on his son's head.

Sirius looked at him curiously. "Is he supposed to look like that?"

Lily rolled her eyes. "Yes!"

Sirius grinned. "Oh, okay. I guess we all can't look amazing on our first day. Man, he's even got your hair already! The poor bloke."

Remus smiled. "But he's got Lily's eyes, I wonder if they will turn green."

Peter grinned. "He's cute alright." His eyes glanced around randomly and then he managed a weird grin at his friends.

"You okay there, Wormtail?" James asked. "You've been acting odd lately."

Peter shrugged. "I'm a little tired."

"Cool. Anyway, I'm a Da!"

"Can I hold him, Prongs?" Sirius asked.

James nodded, as he carefully deposited the tiny bundle into his godfather's arms. "Here you go, Harry; this is your godfather, Uncle Sirius."

Sirius grinned. "Hey little man, I'm holding you to be the one to bring on the Marauders of the new generation. You know, lots of pranks and shagging lots of girls." He winced when Lily slapped his arm. "Okay, well we won't tell your mum about that part. Can you handle that?"

Harry yawned but didn't open his eyes.

James grinned. "I think he likes you."

"He's so tiny. He's the perfect weight for a quaffle."

"SIRIUS!" Lily exclaimed, her eyes widening in horror.

Sirius grinned. "Just kidding, Lily-Love."

"I'm sure," Lily replied.

Remus laughed. "Yeah, Sirius won't use the kid as a quaffle, Lily."

Sirius grinned wickedly. "At least not until he's about one."

Lily laughed from the bed. "Do it and die! Now bring me back my son."

James grinned and placed Harry back into his wife's arms. "My pleasure." Then he leaned over and kissed her softly.

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### ***31st October, 1981 ...***

Harry James Potter was a very happy and well loved child. On his second Halloween, they were celebrating his fifteenth month birthday at the house in Godric's Hollow and he was having the time of his life. He sat in his high chair in the kitchen, playing with the toy snitch that James had bought him. It was the same size as a real snitch but it moved slowly and only floated three feet in any direction so that toddlers could play with it. He clapped his hands loudly as James came into the kitchen and snatched the snitch, before holding it out to his son.'

"Here you go, Sport, is that what you wanted?" James asked.

"Da!" Harry exclaimed, clapping again before holding his arms up.  
"Da, up!"

James laughed and lifted Harry out of his high chair and began to nibble at his fingers as he giggled. "I'm going to eat your fingers off."

"Da! No, Da!" Harry cried out, laughing as his father tickled him and nibbled on his fingers, lifting up his shirt to blow raspberries on his belly as Harry laughed madly.

Lily stepped into the kitchen and smiled warmly at her two favourite men. "James, he was eating."

"Nuh-uh, he was done. He was playing with his snitch."

"Mumma!" Harry cried out in delight, holding his arms out to Lily.

Lily smiled, taking her son into her arms and cuddling him close. He rested his head on her shoulder and shoved his thumb into his mouth. She ran her hands gently along his back. "There's Mummy's big boy!"

Harry sat up and grinned at her, that same cheeky grin that his father had. "Juice!"

James laughed. "You already had juice today, nice try, little bugger."

“Juice!” Harry exclaimed again. “I wanna juice!”

Lily smiled. “No juice, honey. Want to go in the living room and play with Da, Uncle Sirius, Uncle Remus, and Uncle Peter?”

“Yay!” Harry said, clapping his hands together again.

James waited for Lily to kiss Harry’s cheeks before he took him back. “You coming?”

Lily nodded. “Yeah, I’m just going to make us some tea.” She reached up to kiss him softly.

He grinned and shifted Harry to his other arm as he deepened the kiss, grinning against his wife’s lips when Harry cooed happily. “I love you.”

Lily smiled, placing her hand gently on his cheek. “I love you too, now go entertain the Marauders.”

James grinned. “With pleasure.” He headed into the living room with Harry in his arms.

Harry beamed when he saw who was in the room. “Siri!”

Sirius laughed and took Harry from James’ arms. “Hey, Trouble, how’s it going?”

Harry clapped his hands loudly again and began to tug at Sirius’ hair. “Siri!”

James laughed. “Well he’s got your name down anyway, Siri.”

Remus chuckled. “Well, we don’t exactly have names that are easy to pronounce for a one-year-old.”

Lily stepped into the room with a tray of tea. “Fifteen-month-old.”

Peter gave them a vague smile. “Are you going to celebrate this kid’s



birthday every month? Because I'm pretty sure that this is becoming a habit."

Lily smiled. "Of course not! And besides, it's not really a birthday celebration, I just like to have you guys over and it's a good excuse to get you here."

Sirius laughed. "Get us here! Lily, Moony and I practically live here!"

James nodded. "It is true. We never have a moment of peace around here."

Sirius grinned. "Liar." He kissed Harry's cheek as he began to play with the buttons on his shirt, trying to undo them. "What is this kid's obsession with opening things?"

Lily smiled. "He's little and he's exploring. He likes to crawl around the kitchen and open all the cupboards too."

James laughed. "Yeah, and throw out all of the Tupperware. He makes a mess! And don't even get him started on the pots, pans, and wooden spoons; I think he wants to play the drums."

Sirius laughed. "Drums? He's a little young yet, maybe next year!"

Lily smirked. "I don't think so."

Sirius grinned. "Hey, maybe we can get him an electric guitar!"

"No," Lily replied, laughing.

Peter nodded. "Well, I have to get going. I could only drop in today as I've got some errands and things to run for my mother. She's been taking it hard since Dad died."

Lily nodded. "That's fine, Peter. Tell her that I said hello, and that I will come by and see her in the next few days. We'll do lunch."

Peter nodded as he hurried towards the door. "I will. She always enjoys her visits with you, Lily. Bye." He ducked as the toy snitch that

Harry had held in his hand had suddenly been chunked at his head.  
"Bye, kid."

Sirius watched Peter go as he shuffled Harry into his arms before placing him on the ground where he began to crawl around happily.  
"He's been acting really weird lately."

"Who?" James asked, as he tickled his son's feet as Harry tried to crawl away. He loved the sound of his son laughing madly.

"Wormtail. Don't you think he's been acting funny?"

Remus nodded. "Now that you mention it, yeah, he has been acting kind of funny lately. Sort of nervous, well, more nervous than normal anyway."

Lily shrugged. "I don't think it's anything to worry about. We're all nervous. Voldemort only seems to be getting stronger. Did you read about that massacre in Cornwall?"

"Yeah," Sirius said. "It was a massacre alright. Eight Death Eaters went into a muggle primary school and murdered one hundred children. I heard the Ministry went nuts and had to oblivate a lot of people. The muggles are saying it was a cave-in to explain how the building collapsed and how all those kids died. And I heard a rumour about an earthquake as an explanation to the cave-in."

Remus nodded. "There was another one yesterday, towards the back of the Prophet. A woman and her three daughters were raped and killed down in London. I guess they were actually pulled from their car. They were muggles also. But the Ministry of Magic is almost positive that it wasn't a normal muggle crime but that it was Death Eaters."

"And that family down in Dublin, the ones that were killed and beheaded." Sirius replied. "The mother was found stuck on a fence pole and their five-year-old-daughter had been raped and scalped. It's disgusting."

James sighed. "Not to mention all of the missing witches and wizards. He's only getting stronger and worse. But they really are taking this

war to a whole other level. It's just... horrible. Everyone is nervous and there's nothing that any of us can do. I think that that's what's making it worse, this waiting and watching."

"Da! Snisshh!" Harry called out, pointing up at the golden snitch that was floating just out of his reach from where he stood by the coffee table, bouncing in his shoes as he tried to reach for it.

James grinned and reached over to grab it for him. "Say 'snitch' Harry."

"Snisshh!" Harry said again, grinning when James placed it in his hand. "Yay! Mumma, snisshh!"

Lily laughed, pulling Harry up onto her lap to cuddle him close as she kissed his head. He was trying to escape to walk around. "He's getting so big and I can't believe how well he's talking. I mean, he can only say about eight words, but still."

James grinned. "Not to mention, he's trying to do magic on a regular basis now."

Sirius laughed. "What did he do now?"

Lily smirked. "This morning when I was making breakfast, James was cutting up his blueberry waffle and he levitated a pitcher of pumpkin juice right over James' head."

Sirius grinned. "You're kidding?"

James shook his head. "Nope. Then, I was getting him dressed this morning and he kept summoning random things around the room to him. He actually summoned our bed! That king-sized bed in the master bedroom!"

Lily nodded. "And it lifted and moved a good three inches across the room before James noticed. He's going to be very powerful."

Remus smiled warmly. "He's definitely keeping you two on your toes."

Sirius grinned. "He really is getting big fast though. I still can't believe that he's already walking!"

Remus grinned. "Soon you'll be having to train him to go to the loo."

James groaned. "Now that should be an adventure, though thankfully there won't be anymore poopy nappies!"

"Reemssh!" Harry exclaimed, crawling up into Remus' lap to pull at the buttons of his shirt.

Remus laughed. "He's such a great kid, you two are so lucky." He replied, kissing Harry's cheeks.

Lily smiled. "And we couldn't be happier."

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Later on that evening, after Sirius and Remus had left, James and Lily sat in the nursery. Harry was sitting in James' arms, almost asleep on his shoulder as he rocked back and forth in the chair. Lily was gently brushing her fingers through the dark hair on his head.

"He's so beautiful. I just can't get over how beautiful he is."

James gave her a cheeky grin. "That's because he looks like me."

Lily smirked. "He does, and he even has your cheeky grin!"

James smiled at his wife, pulling her closer to kiss her softly. "He has your eyes, the colour and the shape. And he has your lips."

"My lips?" Lily asked; a small dreamy smile on her face.

James nodded. "Yeah, your lips. Look how full they are. I have skinny lips and he's got your mouth too, that soft, almost heart-shape to it. I suppose it should look girlish on him, but it doesn't. It suits him. Just like his name, he's our Harry."

Lily nodded. "He's beautiful, James. And he's all ours. Thank you for

letting me name him after my daddy.”

James grinned. “My pleasure. I think we should name our next one after my Da.”

Lily smiled at him and gently brushed the dark locks from her husband’s eyes. “Of course. Andrew is a fine name.”

James smiled. “Is he asleep?”

“Yeah, here I’ll bring him to bed.” Lily replied as she took her sleeping son from her husband and comfortably placed him on her shoulder. He snuggled into her neck, his hands snaking out to hold her hair as he breathed in her scent, his thumb in his mouth. “I love you, sweetheart.” Lily murmured as she kissed his forehead.

James grinned. “You’re going to smother the poor kid, kissing him every few seconds.”

Lily laughed. “Hardly. I can’t help it, besides I don’t kiss him every few seconds. I’m going to put him to bed.”

James nodded and stood up, placing a kiss on his son’s head and then on the little hand that held Lily’s hair. “Sweet dreams, Harry.” He only grinned when Lily didn’t put him down but instead held him a little closer and swayed back and forth. “You know, Sirius was right earlier, Peter has been acting oddly.”

Lily sighed. “Yeah, I suppose. Sirius is so good with Harry. I think Harry is the best thing to ever happen to Sirius.”

James eyed his wife quizzically. “What do you mean?”

“Well, I mean, having a baby around seems to have mellowed him out. Made him more responsible. He loves Harry like he was his own son.”

James grinned. “He is awfully good with him. Harry loves him, especially when he’s transformed. I think we should get Harry a dog.”

Lily laughed. "He is much too young for his own puppy, maybe next year. Besides, he has Sirius whenever he wants him. Remember that time that Sirius was babysitting and he changed into his dog form. Harry levitated him into his crib. Sirius acted embarrassed by the way that Harry cuddled into him, but he loved every minute of it; even when Harry was pulling on his ears. He would make such a wonderful father."

James grinned. "I don't think that Padfoot has any plans of settling down anytime soon. Besides, Remus is good with Harry too."

Lily nodded. "I know that. But Remus has always been wonderful. I knew that he would be good with Harry; he has a sweet side to him. He would make a wonderful father as well."

"I don't think Remus ever plans to get married. Not with his furry little problem. Moony would never risk it."

"Well, that's stupid. There will be a woman out there that will fall for him and she's not going to care. Then he's going to have to reconsider his options in that area."

James laughed, and leaned down to kiss his wife softly. "Well, that woman is going to have her work cut out for her because Moony can be dead stubborn, when he wants to be. Besides, Sirius and Remus can be around Harry whenever they want."

Lily smiled. "Sirius is a big sucker when it comes to Harry. He turns to absolute mush, and I know that he will deny that until his dying day."

James laughed. "He most certainly will. Mush, Lily?"

"Yes, mush. His heart is involved in our sweetheart here. Harry holds it in the palm of his hand."

James smiled at his wife. "Why don't you lie Harry down and then we'll go curl up in bed and discuss this in more length?"

Lily's eye brow rose slightly. "Oh, you want to discuss Sirius and Remus in bed, do you?"

James grinned. "Hardly. I had something else in mind." He murmured against her mouth as he pulled her close for a long deep kiss, his hand gently creeping up her nightgown.

"Mmm," Lily moaned. "James, I want another baby."

He pulled back and smiled down at her. "Me too. Why don't we go practice on making that second baby?" He asked as he slid his hand along her ribcage causing her to shiver.

Lily smiled up at him. "Why don't we?" She brought her lips to his, enjoying the soft taste of her husband and the lick of desire that was flowing through her body.

A loud bang caused them to break apart and for Harry to wake with a start and to start crying. Lily rubbed her hand up and down his back murmuring to him, "Its okay honey, go back to sleep, mummy's here."

Harry eventually calmed down in a few seconds, but James did not. He looked out the window and gasped. "He's here."

Lily looked up in alarm. "What?"

"Lily, he's here. He's found us. I need you to go; I don't know how long I can hold him off." James replied, looking out the window as he watched the dark hooded figure approach. The bang had obviously been the breaking of the fence out front.

"No, James," Lily said as she held Harry tightly in her arms. "I'm not going to leave you here. We can make a run for it!"

James sighed in frustration. "Lily! We have to keep Harry safe, just do what I say!"

"No! James I'm not going to lose you. I love you!"

The front door opened downstairs, making the house rattle. James turned to his wife once more and kissed her softly before placing a kiss on his son's head. "Lily, he's here, go now and keep Harry safe. I

love you, too.”

“Jamie!” She called out.

James turned at the nickname that only Lily used on him. “I love you, my Lily Rose. Keep our son safe.” Then he hurried down the stairs, leaving Lily and Harry alone in the nursery.

James made it to the bottom of the stairs just as Voldemort was removing his hood. “How did you find us?”

Voldemort grinned, his eyes almost glowing in a reddish haze. “Oh, I have my ways. Where is the boy?”

James clutched his wand tightly by his side. “None of your damn business. You’re not going to lay one bloody hand on my son!”

Voldemort laughed. “And you think that you’re going to stop me?”

James shrugged, his heart pounding in his chest. “I’ve managed to get away three times already.”

Voldemort’s eyes darkened. “Well, this time you won’t.” He pointed his wand and the duel began.

James blocked as many of the spells as he could, using the strongest shield charm that he could make, throwing off every spell. He threw curse after curse back at him, but Voldemort was strong. He gasped as he flew back against the wall, blood spurting from his mouth. No! He would not let this bastard win. Before he could stop the spell, he hit the ground, his body stretching and bending in ways that it shouldn’t as he bit his lip until he bled to keep from screaming. When the spell let up, he jumped to his feet, blood gushing from cuts that had appeared all over his body. He pointed his wand one last time, desperate to protect his wife and son but Voldemort called out the killing curse. He saw a flash of green light and he dived out of the way but he was still dizzy from the Cruciatus and he hit the wall head first, knocking himself out as the world went black around him.

***Back upstairs, in the nursery...***



Lily placed Harry in his crib as tears poured down her face. She kissed her son's cheeks. "I love you, Harry, but we can't let your Da fight him all by himself." The noise from below was deafening, but Lily could not leave her son. She could hear banging and curses, but she didn't know what was going on. Finally she heard someone outside of the nursery half an hour later and she knew instantly that it wasn't James.

"Lily Potter, how very nice to meet you. Now move out of the way, you don't need to die like your husband did." Voldemort intoned, as he pointed his wand at Harry with a sneer.

Lily stood bravely in front of the crib, her wand out. But even as she spoke, determined to protect what was hers, she wondered if James was really gone. "I won't let you hurt him. He's just an innocent little baby!"

Voldemort sneered. "Do you really think that you can defend yourself against the greatest wizard of all time? Your husband certainly didn't, you filthy little mudblood. He's dead."

"NO! I won't let you hurt my baby!"

Voldemort laughed; a long cold almost manic sound that sent chills down Lily's spine. "Move aside you silly girl!"

"NO!"

Voldemort's wand changed directions so fast that it was hard to see what happened. Lily blocked the spell and another duel began, but this one was not as eventful. "Crucio!"

Lily fell to the floor, screaming in pain as Voldemort held his wand there and watched her suffer for over fifteen minutes as he sent the terrible curse at her over and over again. Her arms and legs bent backwards, falling over her head as her limbs cracked. She felt her arm rip out of its socket and her head pounded so hard that she thought it was going to explode.

Then he took the curse off and muttered “Avada Kedavra” as she dived in front of her son’s crib, dodging the light and falling, smacking her head against the crib as she hit the ground. Voldemort sneered, missing the white glow of light that blinked suddenly from around Harry’s crib. Voldemort turned to Harry next and raised his wand. “Avada Kedavra!” Harry watched fearfully as another flash of green light flew towards him and then he heard a painful scream before he glanced around the empty room and he began to cry.

“Mumma! Da! Mumma! Da!” He called out as tears poured down his cheeks. His cries turned into terrified screams when no one came to get him.

He cried for what felt like hours, but was really only around thirty minutes, until Dumbledore appeared over him, scooping him up into his arms. “Shh, Harry, its okay.” Harry stopped crying and stuck his thumb in his mouth, wrapping his other hand around the long silver beard just as Hagrid appeared next to them.

“Blimey ,Dumbledore! Did ‘Arry... he’s alive?”

Dumbledore nodded. “It would appear so.” He was quiet for a moment as he looked down at Harry, who still had tears pouring down his face. He also had a small lightening bolt-cut on the upper right side of his forehead that was bleeding. He glanced down at Lily and he knew what had happened and what now had to be done. “Hagrid, I know where we need to bring Harry. Take him and bring him to this address.” A piece of parchment quickly appeared in his hand as he held it out to the half-giant. “I’ll meet you there.” He placed Harry into Hagrid’s arms, carefully making sure that his small hands were not tangled in his beard and then he Disapparated on the spot, sparing only a quick sad glance at Lily’s bleeding and mangled body.

Hagrid looked down at Harry as he held him in his arms. “‘Arry, shh, don’t cry baby, Hagrid is here now. I’ll take care of you. It’s amazing, you’re alive. But how did you survive, ‘Arry, you’re just a little baby?” He held Harry close as he glanced down at Lily, tears in his eyes. She was bleeding all over her body and she looked like she had died painfully while trying to protect her son. Her arm and leg were bent in

an awkward position as well. He reached down and placed a hand on her throat, but he felt no sign of a pulse. He held back a sob as he headed downstairs just as Sirius stumbled into the house.

“Hagrid, what happened? I went to check... he was gone and now...” He looked over and saw James in the hallway. “No!” He rushed forward, shaking his friend. The shaking became more desperate when he felt no pulse. “James, come on, you can’t be dead, come on, James, wake up! PRONGS!”

“Sirius!” Hagrid said, tears pouring down his face, pulling him away from James. “You’re too late. Lily’s gone too, she’s upstairs in the nursery. There’s only ‘Arry now.”

“Siri!” Harry exclaimed, holding out his arms.

Sirius looked up at Hagrid and then over at Harry, tears rolling down his face. “Give him to me Hagrid, I’m his godfather, Harry’s my responsibility now.”

Hagrid shook his head as he placed a comforting hand on Sirius’ shoulder as Sirius cried. “I can’t, I’ve got Dumbledore’s orders to take him to his muggle aunt and uncle’s house. Petunia Dursley is his godmother, is she not?”

He nodded weakly. “Can I just... can I say goodbye to him, then?”

Hagrid nodded and placed Harry into his arms.

“Siri!” Harry said, grabbing a fistful of his hair.

Sirius nodded, holding Harry close as he kissed his cheeks and his forehead. “I love you, Harry. You’re going to go live with your aunt and uncle. They’ll take good care of you.”

“Da!” Harry said, pointing over at James.

Sirius shook his head no as he sobbed, burying his face into Harry’s neck. “No Da, Harry.”

“Mumma!”

“No Mumma.”

“Siri!” Harry replied, as he rubbed at his eyes, blood was beginning to drip in his eyes from the cut. He knew something was wrong, even as a small child he knew.

Sirius ripped his shirt and gently dabbed at it until the bleeding stopped. “Goodbye Harry, go with Hagrid now.” He kissed Harry again and then he placed him in Hagrid’s arms as Harry began to cry again, this time for Sirius. “Take my bike, Hagrid. If I don’t have to look after Harry, there’s something else that I have to do.” He kissed Harry on the head and walked out of the house without a backwards glance as Harry desperately called out to him.

Hagrid watched him leave and then he headed out to Sirius’ bike to bring Harry to Number Four Privet Drive, Little Whinging, Surrey; to meet with Albus Dumbledore.

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### ***Four hours later ...***

James groaned as he sat up, rubbing his head and finding blood. He placed his hand on the wall behind him as he stumbled to his feet. He was bleeding every where. He could barely stand he was so weak from the lack of blood. The house had practically caved in around him. He picked up his wand, dropping it from his lack of strength. He used his hands, muttering some basic healing charms around his cuts before he grabbed his wand again. Once he was no longer bleeding, he carefully stumbled up the stairs, still weak from the loss of blood. He carefully avoided the broken ceiling which was collapsing around him as he stumbled his way to the nursery. He had to find Lily and Harry.

He stepped into the nursery grabbing the door frame for support. The walls were splattered with blood and most of the furniture in the room was broken. The crib was empty and Lily was lying on the floor, bleeding. He crawled towards her, pulling her into his arms.

"Lily! Come on, sweetheart, wake up!" He shook her. She was so pale and she was cold. Then she let out a moan that stopped his heart. "Lily!" James moaned in relief as he pulled her closer.

She opened her eyes and looked up at him. "Who... who are you?"

James gasped. "Who...? Lily, its James."

Lily stared up at him, her emerald green eyes unfocused and confused. "Do I know you? Who is Lily?" Tears poured down James' face as he scooped her up into his arms and he felt her wince. "Hurts," she moaned.

James checked quickly. It felt like she had a few broken ribs. Her leg and one of her arms were definitely broken. "Come on, honey, I'll take care of you." He glanced around the room and in the crib again but he knew that Harry wasn't there. He picked up the toy snitch from Harry's crib and turned it into a portkey. Then he landed in Dumbledore's office.

Dumbledore looked up in surprise. "JAMES! You're... you're alive? And Lily... how is this...? You were dead?" Dumbledore exclaimed, paling as he stood up, his hands shaking.

James shook his head. "No, I was... unconscious. Albus, Lily's hurt, really bad and she doesn't know who I am. And I can't find Harry. He's not in the house." Tears continued to pour from his eyes and his voice came out in a squeak. "I can't even find his body."

Dumbledore nodded. "Harry's okay, James. Hagrid and I took care of him. Come on; let's get Lily down into the hospital wing. I'll explain if you explain."

James nodded as he carried her down into the hospital wing to let Madam Pomfrey look over her. "She doesn't know me, Albus."

"James, look at me. Poppy will do everything that she can for her. Right now, you need to get checked out and we need to talk."

James shook his head. "I'm okay... I was... I was bleeding everywhere, but I healed myself..." He sat down on the bed next to his wife, shaking.

Madam Pomfrey walked over to him, forcing a blood restoration potion down his throat. "He should be okay, Albus. You can take him upstairs to talk, just make sure that he drinks this every half hour until it's gone."

"NO!" James exclaimed. "I won't leave my wife!"

Dumbledore nodded. "Alright, James, we'll talk in here." He quickly locked the hospital door and sectioned the four of them behind the curtains and placed a silencing charm around them. "Okay, James, tell me what happened."

James nodded. "I've been using my powers, putting a protection spell on Lily and Harry every night in case something happened. Lily was unaware of this though. Tonight, we were upstairs in the nursery and we heard a bang. I saw him, Voldemort; he was coming up the walk. I went down to head him off. We duelled for a while, and then he threw the killing curse at me, I dived out of the way but I don't know if it was far enough, but I was bleeding everywhere. I hit my head on the wall, and I passed out. I woke up and healed my cuts because I was too weak to move. Then I made it upstairs and Lily was... she was lying there in front of the crib, and I couldn't find Harry." He said, his voice coming out in a sob. He buried his face in his hands as he began to cry. "I couldn't find Harry!"

Madam Pomfrey gave him some more blood restoration potion and then forced a calming draught down his throat before she turned back to Lily.

"Harry is alive and well, James." Dumbledore replied.

"He is? Where is he?" James asked, the calming draught taking effect almost immediately.

Dumbledore sighed. "We all thought that you were dead, James, both you and Lily. Neither one of you were breathing. I have no idea how

you... those protection spells must have been pretty powerful, James. I know that you've always had a little something extra in your magic and I think that the only explanation is that it somehow brought you and Lily back to life."

James gulped. "And Harry?"

"I arrived at the house almost immediately after it happened. Harry was screaming in terror in his crib and I thought... well both you and Lily appeared to be dead. Harry however had a lightning bolt cut on his forehead that was bleeding. It will definitely scar, but he'll be alright. I didn't know where to bring him to keep him safe, James, because he survived the killing curse tonight."

"Where is Voldemort?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "I don't know. You see, that is the biggest mystery of all. He disappeared. That prophecy, James, that prophecy said that your little boy would be his downfall but that he would choose his equal. Voldemort didn't hear that part. Lily threw herself in front of Harry, willingly ready to sacrifice herself to save her son. This, I believe, put a special blood bond on Harry. This is old magic, something that Voldemort overlooked. Therefore, after he was done with Lily, he tried to kill Harry and the spell backfired. Voldemort is gone, but, then again, he is not dead. There are celebrations all over the country. Harry is being called the Boy Who Lived. He's a hero."

James nodded. "You don't think that Voldemort's dead?"

"Alas, no, I do not. He has delved farther into the Dark Arts than anyone that I know. He will return to power whether it be tomorrow, next week, next year, or in ten to twenty years. He will come back."

"So, where is my son?"

"Because Harry survived that curse through the blood bond of Lily, I brought him to Lily's blood."

"Petunia! Albus she's not going to want Harry!" James exclaimed.

Dumbledore nodded. "She will take care of him, James. At least, until you are well enough to do so. It is going to be a trying job to raise Harry when he is this famous. You will also have to deal with Lily at the moment. For right now, Harry is safe. Now let's get you better and find out what happened to Lily."

James nodded. "Alright." He allowed Madam Pomfrey to give him a sleeping draught as he nodded at Dumbledore, then his eyes drooped closed and he fell into a dreamless sleep.

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James woke up after twelve full hours of rest thanks to the potion. He glanced around and found Madam Pomfrey sitting on the side of Lily's bed. He sat up quickly and put his glasses back on. "Is she alright?"

Madam Pomfrey sighed. "I don't know. She doesn't know where she is, or even who she is. She is physically broken, James, I can't help her. Her spine is shot and she's paralyzed from the neck down. Her brain is mush and frankly she's a danger to herself as well as others. I think that in time, I can heal her spine and allow her to walk and move again but as for her mind... there's nothing else that I can do for her."

James blinked back tears as he looked at his sleeping wife. "What about St. Mungo's? I mean, they'll know what to do right?"

Madam Pomfrey shook her head sadly. "I'm afraid they won't. There's nothing else that can be done for her. She was tortured to an extreme level and I think that she was put under the Cruciatus repeatedly while already being under the curse. This intensified the pain and the damage. She needs constant care and attention, almost twenty-four hours a day. If you can't do that then you'll have to admit her to the St. Mungo's care ward. Only a miracle will make her better again."

James nodded. "I'll do it. I can't... I can't leave her in a hospital."

Madam Pomfrey nodded. "Alright." She left the room and James



walked over to Lily's bed, taking a seat.

He gently ran his fingers through her hair and kissed her forehead.  
"Oh, sweetheart, I'm so sorry. I should have been there to protect you. I should have made you leave. I'm so sorry, baby." He felt a hand on his shoulder and he turned around to look up at Dumbledore.

"James, this is not your fault. You fought Voldemort and so did Lily. Now she needs you to take care of her."

James nodded. "I'm going to take the best care of her. And Harry." He closed his eyes tightly and brought his wife's hand to his lips.  
"How did Voldemort find us? And why didn't you bring Harry to Sirius? He's his godfather."

Dumbledore sighed. "James, a lot has happened while you were healing in your sleep. Sirius is on his way to Azkaban prison. He doesn't even know that you're alive."

"WHAT? WHY IS HE GOING TO PRISON? I NEED TO SEE HIM; I NEED TO... WHAT HAPPENED?"

"James, I don't know how Voldemort found you. But a few hours ago in a crowded muggle street, Sirius cornered Peter Pettigrew. Witnesses say that Peter started yelling, crying loudly as he screamed at him, demanded of Sirius how he could have worked for Voldemort and then betrayed you, Lily, and Harry."

James shook his head. "No, I don't believe that. Sirius would never... no!"

Dumbledore sighed. "Witnesses say that Peter continued to yell, told Sirius that it was weak of him to lead Voldemort to them. That he wasn't the person everyone thought he was. Then Sirius pointed his wand at Peter and ... well, destroyed him."

"D-destroyed him?"

Dumbledore nodded. "He killed thirteen muggles who happened to be in the proximity and the only thing that they found of Pettigrew was a

finger. After this happened, witnesses say that he stood in the street, with the chaos around him, laughing like a maniac. Bartiemus Crouch has sent him to Azkaban without a trial. The evidence is against him. He led Voldemort to you and then he killed Peter Pettigrew.”

“I can’t... why would he? ...I don’t believe that he would do that! Albus, he was my best mate. He wouldn’t have done this, he can’t have. This has got to be a mistake!” James exclaimed. He looked up anxiously when Remus came into the room. “Remus, it’s got to be a mistake, Sirius wouldn’t...”

Remus shook his head sadly. “He did, James. I didn’t want to believe it either. But over thirty people saw it happen. He killed Peter and he betrayed you. He betrayed us all.”

James blinked back tears of anger as he looked down at his wife. It was Sirius’ fault that she was like this, in a state where she would no longer be able to do anything for herself. “How could he do this? Lily, Harry, and I, we trusted him with our lives. Was he really working for Voldemort?”

Remus nodded. “He was being a double agent. Passing information about the Order over. Crouch says that he has evidence proving it. He didn’t even get a trial because the witnesses proved everything. I’m so sorry, James.”

“But he wasn’t Secret Keeper. I mean, Sirius convinced us to change over at the last minute. We made Peter our Secret Keeper. Sirius was supposed to keep an eye on him! How could he betray us then?”

Dumbledore looked at James sadly. “Sirius led Voldemort to Peter, James. That’s what Peter was yelling about.”

Remus nodded, tears pouring down his cheeks. “That’s why Peter was yelling because he wasn’t brave enough to stand up to Voldemort. He’s a hero, then! He confronted Sirius and he got himself killed!”

Dumbledore nodded. “The Ministry is sending his family an award for Peter’s service. An Order of Merlin I believe. There’s no question of

Sirius' guilt."

James nodded and kissed Lily's hand again. "I need to worry about Lily now. I'm going to take the best possible care of her and I'm going to be a good Da to my son. I don't have time to think about Sirius right now... and how he... he..."

Dumbledore sighed. "Listen, James, Poppy was telling me about Lily's condition. She is going to need constant care, twenty-four hours a day. There's no way that you can raise a baby and take care of Lily. She's not going to live long, James, not in this condition, a few years at most. Harry is safe with the Dursleys until then."

"You think that I should leave him there?" James asked, shocked at such a suggestion.

Dumbledore nodded. "I do. At least until you can bring him home. You can send him letters and gifts and things and visit, but I think that Lily needs you more right now. It would be dangerous for Harry to be in the same house with her. And unless you're willing to put her in a care ward at St. Mungo's, I think that Harry would be better off with his aunt and uncle. You're going to need all of the help that you can get with Lily, James. Between you and Remus, you're not going to have time to give Harry the attention that he needs and deserves. I don't even think that you're going to be able to take care of Lily on your own."

"I'll be there every step of the way, James," Remus replied with tears in his eyes. "I'll help you take care of Lily."

James looked back at his wife as he thought about his son. Then he remembered Petunia. She may have been angry with Lily but he had seen her with children, she had been wonderful. She had been named Harry's godmother after all. He smiled; Harry would be safe and well-cared for. He wouldn't be there long, anyway. He nodded at Dumbledore. "Alright."

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## Chapter 3: Father and Son Reunited

**Author's Notes:** please review! newly edited

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### Chapter III – Father and Son Reunited

***October 1985 ...***

Harry sat in his cupboard, wiping tears from his cheeks as he adjusted his round glasses that his Aunt Petunia had bought him so that he could see. He was scared to go out. He had been putting the dishes away in the cupboard like he was supposed to but then Dudley had run into the kitchen and ran into him, causing him to break three plates and a cup. He already knew that it was going to be his fault. It was always his fault. It didn't matter what had happened, even if they saw exactly what happened and could see for a fact that Harry was not to blame, he was blamed. His hands were bleeding from the broken glass but he stayed in the fetal position, buried deep in the back corner of the cupboard, waiting for the worst and ignoring the pain that he was much too accustomed to, to care.

He was five years old and he had lived with his Uncle Vernon, Aunt Petunia, and his cousin Dudley for his entire life, well as long as he could remember anyway. They hated him and always called him names. Uncle Vernon was especially mean and he liked to hit. Dudley was beginning to like to hit too. Just yesterday he had been beaten with a baseball bat by Dudley while he had cried out for him to stop. Uncle Vernon had told him not to cry and that crying was for babies. He then took the bat from Dudley and proceeded to *'give him something to cry about'*. Uncle Vernon hit way harder than Dudley. Now Harry's back and legs were cut, bruised and bloody as no one ever cleaned up his wounds. His hands hurt now too, from the broken dishes, and a black eye from his Uncle Vernon as well. But then again, he was used to it. He was dirty as they only bathed him once a week, which only irritated the cuts and sores he had on his body. He was also still sore from falling out of the tree last week as well. Uncle Vernon's sister, his Aunt Marge (well not really his aunt but he was forced to call her Aunt) had come over with her dog Ripper. The dog had chased him up a tree and then when he had fallen out had

proceeded to attack him. He was lucky, though, and had only been scraped on the leg as he had managed to run away from the dog. He had always been a fast runner.

His escape from Ripper however had only caused him more punishment. Uncle Vernon had accused him of trying to hurt Ripper and had beaten him with a belt. The welts on his back stung when he moved but he ignored the pain. Pain had been as much a part of his life as hate had been. Harry didn't understand why everyone hated him. He only knew that they thought him a freak. He tried to do what was asked of him but he didn't always understand it. He had been in school now for two months and he loved that. But he had gotten in trouble the first week when he had come home with five golden stars for being good. He had happily showed his Aunt Petunia, hoping that she would understand his hard work, but instead she had frowned at him and Uncle Vernon had beat him again with his belt, accusing him of doing it on purpose and trying to make Dudley look like an idiot. Harry had stopped getting gold stars after that. And then there was the time at Dudley's fifth birthday party, when they had been playing musical chairs and Harry had been winning. Aunt Marge had used her cane on his legs to knock him over so that Dudley would win.

His stomach let out a loud grumble as he remembered that he hadn't eaten in two days. He had accidentally cut one of Aunt Petunia's roses when he was weeding the garden and his punishment had been extra chores and a week with no food. He had only gotten water, which he guzzled back greedily hoping that his punishment would end soon. But his hopes had been dashed with the broken dishes.

Now he was waiting for Uncle Vernon to come and punish him again for the broken dishes. He cowered in the back corner in fear, wishing that he was big and strong so that he could fight back. He bit his lip as it quivered when he heard Uncle Vernon's voice yell, "Boy!" He slid farther into the back, trying to hide. His aunt and uncle never called him by his name.

The cupboard he was currently trying to hide in was under the stairs and had been his bedroom for as long as he could remember. It was the only room in the house that he was allowed to go in without permission. They would always lock him in from the outside. But

Harry had stolen a screwdriver from Uncle Vernon's toolbox and he had carefully placed it on the lock, causing the door to lock into place from the inside. He was desperately hoping that it would hold out. But at the same time he was wondering if it was only going to cause him more trouble in the end.

He closed his eyes and thought back to the dream that he had the night before. It had been about his mum and dad he was sure of it. He had asked Aunt Petunia about his mum and dad that morning and she had told him that they were dead. She said that they had died, leaving her to deal with him and his unnaturalness. She had then told him not to ask anymore questions or he would be punished. Harry had cried at this, he wished that someone would take him away from this hell that he was living in. The footsteps got closer and the lock on the cupboard door began to rattle as he trembled in fear furiously blinking back tears just as the doorbell rang ...

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James stood on the front porch of Number Four Privet Drive, his hands in his pockets. He was here to take Harry away, back to Potter Manor to live with him. He knew that his son would now be five years old, but he hadn't seen him since the night that Voldemort had come to Godric's Hollow. Dumbledore had told him that the Dursleys were taking care of Harry... well they had promised to anyway, as Dumbledore hadn't checked up on it. Petunia wrote letters to James telling him that Harry was fine. They never well explained anything about his son though and he had ached to hold and to see his son in his arms, but he couldn't. Petunia had sent a yearly picture but it wasn't nearly enough. James' letters were always full of questions that Petunia barely answered, but James assumed that she was still sore about everything that had happened with Lily and with the death of her parents so he didn't pursue it.

Lily had only gotten worse. Madam Pomfrey hadn't been lying when she had said that she was a danger to herself and to others. She didn't know who anyone was and she didn't know anything about the magical world or the muggle world. Madam Pomfrey had managed to heal her body physically but it was her mind that was destroyed beyond repair. James had taken her wand away but she had still

done dangerous magic that made James thankful that Harry wasn't around. He would have been hurt by some of her tricks. She had once got a hold of a knife as well and had begun cutting herself, magically levitating the knife to slice at herself. Her mind was worse than a child's and only the day before, Lily had slipped into an irreversible coma. The healers said that she would never wake up again. Remus had told James that it was time to let her go. James knew that his friend was right. He took Moony's advice into question when he made his final decision, only the night before. She had survived in that condition for four long years and now it was up to him to let her go or put her in St. Mungo's. James had taken everything into account when he made his decision.

Now he wanted and needed to raise his son. His entire life had been consumed by Lily and even though he had written letters and sent money and gifts, he knew that it wasn't the same as seeing his son. But he hadn't been able to get away. He couldn't leave Lily alone. Remus had been a big help to him, but even Remus couldn't handle Lily alone. Most of the time, James needed Remus to help him out. She was completely gone and she was dangerous. Remus had lost his job as an Auror when Moody had retired and the new department head had found out that he was a werewolf. James had quit soon after as he needed to be with Lily twenty-four hours a day. Together, James and Remus had taken care of her, until she had slipped into the coma.

If that wasn't bad enough; if he hadn't suffered enough in his lifetime with the way that he had lost his wife and his son, his best friend had betrayed him. When James heard about Sirius being sent to Azkaban for the murder of Peter Pettigrew and for betraying the whereabouts of his family, he had refused to believe it. Sirius would never do such a thing. But the evidence had been against him, and Peter was dead. James and Remus had both refused to speak to Sirius again. As far as James knew, Sirius didn't even know that he was still alive. He pushed the painful memories from his mind and focused instead on the task at hand. He was here to bring his son home with him, something that he had dreamed about doing for the last four years.

He closed his eyes and rang the doorbell again, wondering what was taking them so long to answer the door. Vernon Dursley, a large

beefy man with a thick moustache and no neck, opened the door, anger flashing in his eyes. He looked at James, obviously not recognizing him. "Who the hell are you? If you're a salesman, I'm not interested."

James smiled warmly, well, attempted to, anyway, "I'm not a salesman. I'm James Potter and I'm here for Harry."

Vernon nodded. "About damn time. Come in. Petunia, James Potter is *finally* here!"

Petunia Dursley came into the room holding a chubby little boy's hand tightly in hers. He assumed this was their son, Dudley. "Hello James. How is Lily?"

"She's..." he began, closing his eyes and swallowing. "I sent you a letter that I was coming."

Petunia's eyes looked alarmed and sad for a moment as she realized James' sadness, but she quickly masked it. "Oh, well... the boy's around here somewhere. He just broke some of my best dishes, dripping blood everywhere and he hurried off. Now he's hiding. He's probably bleeding everywhere! Hopefully you can find him, James."

James' hazel eyes turned the colour of smoke. "What the hell are you letting a five-year-old boy play with glass dishes for? And why does he run away and hide from you when he's bleeding? I highly doubt that the dishes were the first priority."

Petunia snorted, her face upturned in a look of disgust. "My Dudders was cut too, I tended him first and when I turned around the boy was gone."

"Where the hell is my son?" James asked, venomously. He didn't like the way they kept referring to his son as 'the boy'.

Vernon shrugged. "I think he's in that cupboard. He usually hides in there."

James glared at the both of them, before he stomped off to the



cupboard angrily and rattled the lock. It had obviously been locked on the inside. He pulled out his wand and muttered 'Alohamora' and pulled the cupboard door open. He then realized that there was a small mattress in there with a dirty pillow and sheet that had blood dripped on it. His anger intensified. *Did his son sleep in here?* He noticed a few of the toys that he had sent on the shelves, but they were all broken. He lit his wand and climbed into the cupboard, ducking so that he could sit on the bed. He hardly had enough room to move, with his height.

"Harry, are you in here?" He asked quietly.

He heard a whimper and turned towards the sound. "Don't hurt me! I didn't mean to break the dishes! Dudley ran into me!" He murmured. "I'll stop crying, I'm not a baby!"

James' heart broke at the sound of the whimper and at the words. What did he mean by '*hurt me*'? "I won't hurt you, Harry, come on out."

Harry moved towards the voice. It wasn't Uncle Vernon talking to him. The voice was deep and kind, and somewhat familiar. When he got closer he saw the smiling man with the glasses and messy black hair. "Who are you?"

James smiled. "I'm your Da."

Harry shook his head. "Uh-uh, Aunt Petunia said that my mum and da were dead and that I'm not supposed to be asking questions."

James' eyes flashed in anger and Harry took an automatic step back but James grabbed him, pulling him up onto his lap. He gasped when he saw his hands. They were bleeding everywhere. He used his magic to transfigure one of the broken toys into a water goblet and then he filled it up. He ripped a piece of the bed sheet and then began to wipe the blood from his son's hands. He healed the cuts and then cleaned his hands up. Harry was staring up at him in awe, he obviously didn't know how to act with the idea that magic was happening around him. "I'm your Da, Harry, I'm not dead. I'm here to take you home with me."

Harry's eyes lit up. This guy said that he was his Da and he had a kind voice and kind hands and he wanted to take him away from here. He was holding him on his lap in a warm embrace, something that no one had ever done before. "Are you going to hurt me?" He asked quietly, but in his heart he knew the answer was no.

James shook his head no, leaning down to kiss Harry's forehead. "Never. I love you."

Tears welled up in Harry's eyes and he cuddled closer into the warm embrace. The scent of the man was oddly familiar and he liked it. No one had ever said those three words to him before. "Da." Harry sighed.

James slid out of the cupboard, Harry in his arms, and then he gasped again. His son had one hell of a shiner. He turned around, and faced the Dursleys. "What the hell did you do to him?"

Vernon shrugged. "He got what was coming to him. That boy has been nothing but trouble since the day that he arrived here! I was teaching him a lesson!"

James carefully placed Harry down onto his feet and shoved his wand into his back pocket then he walked over to Vernon Dursley and punched him in the gut, then in the face. As blood spurted out of his nose, James stood back. "If you EVER lay a hand on my son again, I'll kill you." Then he turned around, scooped Harry back up into his arms and walked out of the house, without a backwards glance.

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Harry wasn't sure how to act or what to do. The man who was holding him closely and so carefully in his warm arms, sounded and smelt so familiar. He had messy black hair just like Harry and he even wore round glasses. His eyes were a pretty hazel colour and Harry didn't forget the way that they had darkened to smoke when he was angry. He smelt like lemon soap, sweat, and oddly enough, peppermint. His arms were strong as they held the small boy in his arms.

James stomped angrily all the way down the street until he arrived at a small park. He took a seat on the bench, still holding Harry on his lap before he looked down at the boy. He was almost identical to the way that he had looked at that age. But his mouth and his eyes were still all Lily. He carefully adjusted Harry's glasses and sighed, the poor kid had even gotten his eye sight. He smiled warmly at Harry and then slipped off his jacket and placed it around Harry's shoulders. He had been so angry that he had forgotten to ask the Dursleys for Harry's things. He was not too keen on having to go back there.

"So, why don't you tell me about your aunt and uncle? Did they hurt you a lot?"

Harry nodded, carefully averting his eyes. This man was kind but he had learned at a very young age to be careful of what he said. "Uh-huh."

James put his hand on Harry's chin, wincing inwardly when he flinched, tilting his head up so that he could look into the green eyes. "Why?" When Harry didn't answer, James sighed. "You never have to go back there or see them ever again. Why did they hurt you, Harry?"

Harry shrugged. "They said that I was always making trouble. But I wasn't! I didn't mean to break anything." He sniffed back the tears that threatened to fall as he continued to ramble on. "And I didn't turn the teacher's hair blue at school, all I did was think it would look funny if it was blue, but Uncle Vernon says that I'm a freak of nature and that I must be punished for my sins."

James shook his head. "No, you're not a freak of nature. You're a wonderful and very special boy." He cuddled Harry closer on his lap, pulling him close for a warm hug and ignoring the way that Harry stiffened in his arms. He just held him, rubbing his hand up and down his back until he felt him relax even though he seemed to wince every time James put any pressure down. "Do you remember anything of your life before you went to go live with Uncle Vernon and Aunt Petunia?"

Harry nodded. "Only a bit. You smell like something I remember.

Someone who smelt like you used to hold me a lot and a woman with red hair sang to me. Then there's a lot of green light. I asked Aunt Petunia about the light and she said that it was from the car accident. That's how she said you died was in a car accident and that's how I got this scar." He explained, pointing to the lightning bolt-scar on his forehead.

James sighed. He wasn't sure how he was supposed to explain this to a five-year-old but he knew that he had to explain something because as soon as they went back into the magical community, Harry was going to be a hero. He studied the scar on his son's forehead for a minute, tracing it gently with his finger. "Harry, I smell familiar because it was I who used to hold you. I'm your Da. Your mum has red hair and she used to sing to you. The green light is from ... the night that changed everything. Let me tell you a story. I think it will be easier to understand then."

Harry leaned back comfortably against James, snuggling under his arm as he stayed on his lap buried under the leather jacket. "No one's ever told me a story before."

James smiled and kissed the top of his son's head. "Well, once upon a time, there was a community of magic people. These witches and wizards were going about their daily lives as normal except for one terrible thing that was going on; a war. There was a dark and evil wizard who was hurting people and trying to take over all of them. There was a special group of witches and wizards who were working against this evil wizard in a group called the Order of the Phoenix. This group worked hard to try to stop the evil wizard from succeeding. While all of this was happening, young witches and wizards were still going to school. One young beautiful witch with auburn coloured hair and emerald green eyes had caught the eye of a handsome wizard named James Potter. The young witch's name was Lily Evans. They fell in love and they got married right out of school and together with the help of their best friends, Remus Lupin, Sirius Black, and Peter Pettigrew, they joined the Order of the Phoenix to help fight the evil wizard."

"Did the evil wizard have a name?" Harry asked.

James nodded. "He did. His name was Lord Voldemort. Now he wasn't really a lord, but the name gave him power. In fact, his powerful name had caused so much fear in the magical community that no one would dare utter it. Instead everyone called Voldemort names like 'You-Know-Who' or 'He Who Must Not Be Named'. Not everyone did this, of course, but most of the world did. Now James and Lily were happily married and were working for the Ministry of Magic to become Aurors. An Auror is a dark wizard catcher and they chose that job because they wanted to see Voldemort destroyed, so he would stop hurting people. Albus Dumbledore, the head of the Order of the Phoenix, had become a good friend to James and Lily. He always told them to be careful. Then one day, James came home from work to find Lily waiting for him. Lily told James that they were going to have a baby. James and Lily were so happy. They had always wanted to be a mummy and a da. But then, before Lily had the baby, Dumbledore called them to his office at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where he resided as Headmaster of the school. He said that he had to tell them something very important. When James and Lily arrived, he told them that a woman had made a prophecy about someone who could defeat Lord Voldemort."

Harry's eyes were now wide with interest as he snuggled into his father's arms. He never questioned the familiar feeling of faith and unwavering trust that had sprung up in his heart. He just cuddled close, happy to feel the strong arms around him. "What's a prophecy?"

"A prophecy is a prediction or an idea where someone says something that will happen in the future. Kind of like the weather man except about more important things." When Harry nodded in understanding, James continued. "This prophecy stated that two people who had three times escaped Lord Voldemort would have a baby born at the end of July who would be able to get rid of the evil wizard. Dumbledore told James and Lily that a Death Eater, which was the name of the followers who supported Lord Voldemort, had overheard some of the prophecy and that Voldemort believed that the baby of James and Lily Potter was the one who would defeat him. So he planned to come and kill the baby. James and Lily were horrified and scared so Dumbledore convinced them to go into hiding, using a special charm that would keep them hidden unless their Secret

Keeper told them where they were. A Secret Keeper is the person who knows where they are, they keep the secret to where the person is hiding. James and Lily asked Sirius Black to be their Secret Keeper because he was James' best mate and they trusted him more than anything. But at the last minute, Sirius convinced James and Lily to change Secret Keeper to Peter Pettigrew because he was weak, and no one would ever suspect that they would choose Peter to hide them. James and Lily and their new baby, Harry, lived in hiding for over a year. But then on their second Halloween in the house in Godric's Hollow, James and Lily were rocking Harry to sleep in the nursery when a loud bang woke Harry up. When James looked out the window, he saw Lord Voldemort coming up to the house. Someone had betrayed their secret and now he had found them!"

"Did they get rid of Voldemort?" Harry asked; though Voldemort came out sounding more like Voldaymart. "Did James and Lily kill him?"

James shook his head. "No, something terrible happened. James told Lily to stay upstairs in the nursery and to try to escape with baby Harry. James was going downstairs to fight Voldemort. He kissed Lily and Harry and then he went down to fight. James fought back, using his magic wand to send curse after curse at the evil wizard but he was too strong. James dived out of the way to avoid being hit with a jet of green light that would have killed him, but he hit the wall hard and everything went black around him. Voldemort then went upstairs. Lily tried to fight him off, begging him not to hurt her baby. But Voldemort ignored her. He sent a terrible curse at her that made her suffer and scream in pain. Then he sent a jet of green light at her as well. But Lily threw herself in front of Harry's crib, sending her love over him as a last minute protection and diving out of the way of the light. Voldemort then raised his wand and pointed it at Harry, and he said those terrible words that send that dangerous green light. But then something amazing happened. Instead of baby Harry dying like he was supposed to, the spell backfired and hit Voldemort instead. Voldemort screamed in pain and he disappeared, leaving baby Harry crying in his crib with nothing but a lightning bolt scar on his forehead."

Harry's hand automatically went to his forehead, touching the scar. "Me?"

James nodded. "Yes, Harry. It was you. You managed to make the evil wizard Lord Voldemort disappear when you were fifteen months old. Of course, you didn't know what you had done. Dumbledore arrived at the house and he thought that James and Lily were dead. He picked you up, Harry, and he realized that it was Lily's love, the love of your mum that had saved you. So he decided to send you to live with the only other person who shared your blood, Petunia Dursley, Lily's sister. He brought you to live at the Dursleys because there he thought you would be safe from Lord Voldemort. However, a few hours later, James woke up. He hadn't died like everyone had thought. He was hurt really badly, but he ran upstairs, the house was collapsing around him. He went into the nursery, looking for Harry and Lily. Harry's crib was empty and he was nowhere to be found. But Lily was lying on the ground badly hurt. James brought her to the hospital immediately and he found out that Lily was alive but very sick. Her body was broken and she didn't remember anything. She didn't even know who she was or who James was. She was a danger to herself and to the people around her. James cried when he realized how sick she was. Then he talked to Dumbledore. Dumbledore was shocked to realize that James and Lily were both alive. He quickly told James that Harry was safe and that he had brought him to live with his godmother, Petunia Dursley. When he found out how sick Lily was, Dumbledore convinced James that if he wanted to take care of Lily it would be best to leave Harry to live with the Dursleys. Lily wasn't going to live in that state very long. James was hesitant at first because he wanted his son Harry to be with him at all times. But he soon realized that Dumbledore was right, Lily might hurt Harry."

James took a deep breath as he breathed in the scent of his son. Even through the blood and the grime, he smelt like a child. "So, James decided to leave Harry with the Dursleys while he took care of Lily. He sent toys and letters and money to Harry at the Dursleys but he couldn't leave Lily alone so he never got to visit. Then after four years, Lily fell into a coma. One morning she just never woke up. He loved her so much. James knew that it would now be safe to bring Harry home with him again. After that, James went to the Dursleys house and rang the doorbell. After a quick conversation with Vernon Dursley, James soon realized that Harry was hiding somewhere and bleeding because he had broken some dishes. James found him

hiding in a cupboard under the stairs. He cleaned up his cuts, punched Vernon Dursley for treating his son so terribly and then he brought Harry out to a park to explain everything.”

Harry looked up at James in awe, sadness, and curiosity. “So mum’s dead like Aunt Petunia said?”

James nodded sadly, looking off into the distance as he spoke. “Uh... she... yeah.”

Harry swallowed carefully. “But I didn’t get any toys or money or letters from you?”

James looked at Harry quizzically for a moment. “But I saw some of the toys that I sent you in that cupboard. The medieval knights action figures, and the dump truck, and the draw bridge and the mini castle. Those are from me.”

“Oh... well, Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon gave them to Dudley. I don’t have any toys. I only get the toys after Dudley breaks them or if he doesn’t want them anymore.”

James’ eyes flashed in anger again. Those damn people! “Well I guess the letters went in the garbage and the money probably in their own pockets then. Do you have any clothes that fit you?”

Harry looked down at the baggy shorts and tee shirt he wore and shook his head no. “No, I just wear Dudley’s old clothes.”

James nodded again. “Don’t worry. We’ll get you new clothes. So Harry, do you have any questions about the story that I told you?”

“Did that all really happen?”

“Yes it did. I’m James Potter, your Da.”

Harry smiled meekly up at James. “I have one more question.”

James smiled. “Of course.”



“How did Voldemort find you? Did the Secret Keeper give you away?”

James’ eyes seemed to darken in anger again. “That is the worst part of all. Only four people knew about the Secret Keeper and where we were, me, your mum, Peter Pettigrew, and Sirius Black. A few hours after Voldemort came to the house; Sirius cornered Peter in a crowded street. Peter told him that he was a terrible person, asking him why he had betrayed us. It turns out that Sirius was secretly working for Voldemort and he sent him after Peter, knowing that Peter would not hold out and give the secret away. Then he killed Peter and thirteen muggles with one terrible curse. He’s in Azkaban prison now. He doesn’t know that Lily and I survived. I’ve never gone to visit him.”

“What’s a muggle? And wasn’t Sirius your best friend?” Harry asked.

James nodded. “He was my best friend which is why I can’t believe that he would betray me like that. I didn’t believe it at first, but the evidence was against him and Peter was dead. A muggle is the name of someone who isn’t magical.”

“Like me?”

James laughed and shook his head. “No, like the Dursleys. You’re magical, Harry; you’re a wizard like me.”

“I am? Can I do magic?” Harry asked, practically bouncing in excitement.

James smiled. “Not yet, though you can do some obviously since you turned your teacher’s hair blue. It was you who did it and your aunt and uncle knew that, they just refused to tell you the truth.”

Harry grinned. “Do I get to live with you now?”

James smiled and kissed the top of Harry’s head again. “You sure do. Is that okay with you?”

Harry’s grin widened and for the first time that he could remember, his heart swelled with joy. “Yeah!”

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Harry couldn't believe his luck. After his Da had explained everything to him in the park they had went to Mrs. Figg's house. Harry thought that this was weird, as Mrs. Figg was the batty old cat lady that he had always gone to go stay with when the Dursleys had somewhere to go. Then his Da had thrown some powder into the fire place and green flames had come up. He held Harry in his arms and stepped into them. At first, Harry had been afraid, but the flames were just pleasantly warm and hadn't hurt. Once he was inside he called out 'Leaky Cauldron' and they had spun around and around until they came out in this dark and dingy bar. No one really paid attention to them as they stepped out into muggle London.

Harry had held tightly to James' hand as they walked through so many stores that his head was spinning. He had never been anywhere but the Dursleys, school, and Mrs. Figg's house. He had gotten new jeans and shoes and all sorts of pants and shirts and coats and jumpers and pyjamas and socks and underwear and a bathing suit. More clothes then he had ever seen in his life. Then they had gone back to the Leaky Cauldron and through a back alleyway where his Da had tapped his wand on the bricks and it had opened up into a huge village of stores that was apparently called Diagon Alley. They had went into a robe shop there and Harry had gotten some dress robes and a cloak. He thought these clothes were odd looking but his Da had explained that a lot of wizards wore robes instead of muggle clothes. James wanted Harry to have both. Then they went to the book store and James had bought Harry a lot of books on magic and learning for younger kids. James had then gone into a store filled with broomsticks and bought a child-sized one for Harry.

Loaded up with all of their purchases, they went back into the fire and appeared at a place that James had called 'Potter Manor'. Harry was amazed when he walked into the rich and beautiful entrance way. The large entranceway had lots of bright windows surrounding the large oak double front doors and a skylight. It was beautiful. The walls were a light cream colour with a gold trim that matched the marble floor. He had never seen ceilings so high in his life. He turned around

to look at the fireplace that he had just come out of and grinned. It was huge. The fireplace stood eight feet tall and eight feet wide and it was made of marble and stone and everything in the room just glistened.

Two small funny looking creatures had appeared in the room then, taking Harry's attention off of the room. One was obviously female as she wore a black maid's dress and a white apron. The male creature wore black pants, a white shirt, and a black vest with a black bow-tie.

James grinned at them. "Hey you guys, this is my son Harry. Harry, this is Maddy and Mickey, they're house elves and they take care of the cooking and cleaning of the house."

Maddy grinned at them. "Master Harry, it is so nice to be meeting you." She replied in a high-pitched voice.

Mickey nodded eagerly. "Very nice, sir."

James smiled. "You can just call him Harry; only refer to him as master like you do me, when I'm being spoken of."

Mickey nodded. "Of course, James. Would you like anything?"

Harry stared at them in awe. "Um ... er ... hello."

James smiled warmly at Mickey. The house elf couple had been around and married since he was little. He had always been close with Mickey. "I'm alright thanks. I'm going to show Harry around and then we'll figure out if we need to decorate his room. Come on, Harry."

Harry took James' hand as Maddy and Mickey began to get the packages they had bought. He followed his Da into the different rooms in awe. They started in the library. There was a huge fireplace against the wall and lots of large comfy furniture around it. Bookshelves lined the walls, going so high up that both ladders and stairs were erected around the room. The study was next, a smaller room. It was all outlined in oak paneling and one whole wall was bookshelves. There was a large desk in front of the big window and a

couple of comfy chairs outlining the room. The shelves were filled with awards and trophies as well. In the living room, Harry was thoroughly impressed. It was filled with lots of comfy chairs and furniture, though it also had a chess table, a pool table, an air hockey table, a ping pong table, a poker table, and a table made just for Exploding Snap. James explained each thing as they walked through.

He followed James down another corridor, this one had three doors. The first one was a large half-bathroom. The second one took Harry into the largest dining room that he had ever seen. The floor was stone and the walls were blue with huge windows that stood from the floor to the ceiling, outlining the room in moonlight. The table was long enough to hold fifty people. The table itself was solid oak and every chair matched. That's when he noticed the moving pictures on the walls. He jumped in surprise when one of them talked to him.

"And you must be Harry!" The voice boomed.

James placed a reassuring hand on his son's shoulder. "Da, be nice, Harry just came from one hell of a place." He turned to Harry and gave him a small smile. "Harry, in the wizarding world people can make portraits of themselves before they die so that they have all of their memories in it. All of the Potters do so. This here is my Da, Andrew Quinton Potter II and the beautiful redhead next to him is my mum, Gwendolynn Potter. They're your grandparents."

Gwendolynn Potter smiled warmly at Harry. "You look so much like your Da. You can call me Grandma."

Harry grinned up at the pictures. They were the most amazing thing that he had ever seen. "Hello Grandma, Grandda."

Andrew grinned. "That's a fine boy! Did you just get in?"

James nodded. "Yeah, I'm just going to show him around the house and then we'll be back for dinner. Bye Da, Mum."

Harry waved goodbye to the portraits, then he turned to grin up at James. "Does my mum have a picture too?"

James shook his head. "No she, uh ... no."

"Oh." Harry said quietly as he followed his father into the next room.

The kitchen was huge. It had a stone tile floor with lots of beautiful oak cupboards with glass doors. There was a small round wooden table over in the corner as well as a breakfast nook and lots of big windows looking out into the backyard. There was a door at the back of the kitchen that led to a small apartment. There were four bedrooms and a tiny bathroom all furnished to accommodate the house elves.

"My great-great-grandparents had this section added onto the house. This way Maddy and Mickey have their own privacy and if they want to have children they have lots of room for them. Come on, there's lots more to see." James explained.

Harry next saw an indoor swimming pool, a huge backyard with a pool, a hot tub spa, lots of gardens, a huge patio, and a Quidditch pitch. When they went upstairs he learned that this house had four floors other than the ground floor. The house also had both an east and west wing. The eastern wing was mostly guest rooms and storage. It had over thirty bedrooms with their own private bathrooms and some of them had sitting rooms as well. The west wing was where the family apparently stayed. It had over thirty rooms as well with private adjoining bathrooms and sitting rooms. James showed him the master bedroom which was the largest in the manor and was in the west wing. He then brought him to the room right next door. He pushed open the room and Harry grinned broadly.

The room was huge. There was Queen-sized bed in the middle of the room, a private bath off to the side, a huge walk-in-closet, a dresser, two night stands, a bookshelf with a few books on it, a desk and a chair, and a huge wooden trunk. The floors were hardwood and gleaming and the walls were painted a bright royal blue with a white ceiling. The bedspread was red, black, blue, and white plaid with black sheets and pillows. There was a huge chest in the corner filled to the brim with toys and Maddy was standing in front of the closet hanging up some of his new clothes.

James grinned at Harry's face. "Well, what do you think of your room?"

Harry gasped as he turned around. "My room?"

James nodded. "Yup, it's all yours. I thought that the plaid was good for a bed spread but if you don't like it I can get you something else."

Harry turned around and hugged James' legs, until he bent down to pull his son into his arms. "Thanks Da. I've never had such a nice room."

James smiled. "Well, now it's all yours. My room is right next door if you ever need me for anything, okay?"

Harry nodded. "Okay."

James glanced at his watch. It was getting late. "Come on; let's go get you some dinner before bed."

Harry nodded and James carried him down into the kitchen. They sat down at the table and Maddy served them hamburgers and French fries with a salad. James had thought that it was a good meal to start with. He had seen how hungry Harry had been when he had taken him out to lunch. The boy had eaten like he hadn't eaten in days, but knowing the hell that he had found him in, James knew that this was entirely possible. Once they were done eating, he filled up the tub for Harry to take a bath. He offered to help but he soon learned that Harry had been taking baths by himself for over a year. The Dursleys had obviously wanted him to grow up quickly.

James was furious when he gave Harry some toys to play with in the bathtub and he noticed his son's body. His back was covered in red welts and he was black and blue. They didn't seem to bother Harry, but they bothered James. He managed to keep his anger in check as he played with his son and with the toy boats and trucks and people that were floating in the water. Once he was dried off and clean, James told him to lie down on the bed so that he could heal his cuts. Maddy brought up some salve that James carefully spread it on the welts and scrapes, using his magic to heal as much as he could but

he knew that most of them were going to have to heal in time. Harry would also probably have a few scars. James handed him a new pair of pyjamas and then he tucked him into bed, leaning down to kiss his forehead.

“Goodnight, Harry, I love you.”

Harry grinned up at his father, his heart bursting with joy. “Goodnight, Da, I love you too.” Then he closed his eyes and he was out before his head even touched the pillow.

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## Chapter 4: Childhood

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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### Chapter IV – Childhood

Harry woke up the next morning, wrapped comfortably and warmly in the large bed. He glanced around the room, unsure of where he was at first, and then he remembered. A grin shot across his face at the realization that it hadn't been a dream. He really had been rescued from the Dursleys by his Da, and he had been given lots of new clothes and toys. He was in a mansion, and had been given hugs and kisses and his Da had said he loved him. He climbed out of bed and carefully tip-toed across the room, opening his bedroom door carefully and peaking out of the door to see if he was allowed to go downstairs. He noticed that the two big oak doors that led to the master bedroom were closed. He knocked softly but there was no answer. Harry carefully pushed open the door and looked at the bed.

James was sleeping soundly, snoring a bit as he snuggled between the pillows. The blankets were in a huge heap around him and he had one leg hanging off the king-sized bed as if he didn't have enough room to sleep. Harry stood in the doorway, hesitating. He wasn't supposed to go into rooms without permission. But that had been at

the Dursleys and his Da had been so different. He gulped and then he tip-toed over to the bed and poked James in his bare chest. James let out a snort and Harry jumped. Then he poked him again. This time, he opened his eyes.

“Harry?”

“Hi, Da.” Harry said carefully.

James noticed the hesitation in speech and he could see the fear in his son’s eyes. He was still afraid to do anything because he didn’t know the rules. James sighed; he was going to fix that. He grabbed Harry and tossed him into the big bed next to him, tickling him in the stomach as Harry let out a giggle. Then he rubbed his stubbly chin on his face, making Harry squirm in delight. After tickling him until he begged for him to stop, he rolled over and tossed his arm over his eyes. “It’s not morning yet.”

Harry grinned. He had never been tickled like that in his life. It had been fun. “The sun is out.”

“Nuh-uh!”

Harry laughed, bouncing on the bed now. “It is. I could see it shining in the window.”

James grinned and snuggled into his pillow. “I guess that means that you want me to get up and give you some breakfast?”

Harry smiled. “Only if it’s okay.”

“Harry, it’s always okay. Yeah, alright, I’m getting up. But I can’t cook at all.” James replied as he climbed out of bed. He stretched lazily as he walked to the dresser for a t-shirt. The black pyjama pants that he wore were slightly faded at the stress points. At twenty-three, James felt like an old man. He turned to look over at his son and grinned. “Come on, Harry, let’s go see what we can con Maddy into making. I bet if you ask her she’ll make French toast.”

“What’s French toast?” Harry asked curiously.



James laughed as he scooped his son up into his arms and kissed his forehead. "Only the greatest breakfast food ever invented! Let's go!"

\*\*\*\*\*

After breakfast, Harry got dressed in some of his new clothes and came downstairs, just as a tall man with light brown hair and brownish gold eyes came out of the fireplace. He looked up in surprise at the sight of Harry just as James came into the room.

"Moony, I was wondering when you would get here." He put his hand on Harry's shoulder and smiled warmly. "Harry, this is one of my best friends, and your honorary uncle, Remus Lupin, you used to call him Uncle Remus or Uncle Moony."

Harry smiled at the man, but Remus didn't fail to notice the hesitation. "Hello."

Remus grinned and knelt down so that he was eye-level with Harry. "Hello Harry, welcome home." He tugged the boy to him and hugged him close, pleased when Harry's small hands fisted in his shirt.

Harry grinned up at him when he pulled away. He felt that same instant trust from this man as he had felt from his Da. He also felt a sense of unwavering love both towards and from the two men in front of him. "Where do you live?"

James laughed. "He lives here with us. But he had to go away on some business."

Harry nodded. "Oh. Uncle Remus, Da said that he was going to teach me how to play something called Quidditch. Are you going to play with us too?"

Remus grinned and turned his attention to James. "Why am I not surprised to know that that's your first priority?" He turned back to Harry with a grin. "Of course I'll play!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Later on that evening, after Harry was in bed, James sat in the living room with Remus. "Well, what do you think, Moony?"

Remus smiled. "He's wonderful, James. He looks an awful lot like you. He's smart too and he learns quickly. But he's... hesitant I suppose is the word, to do anything."

James nodded. "They were terrible to him. Petunia and Vernon... I thought that they would take care of him, as did Dumbledore. Though I have yet to confront him about it, but they were horrible. They beat him, Moony, I mean physically beat him. When I got there he had apparently broken some dishes. His hands were cut up and bleeding. I healed them and cleaned up the wounds. He was sleeping in a cupboard under the stairs on a dirty cot. They told him that Lily and I were dead and they gave all the toys that I sent him to their son Dudley. I suppose they pocketed the money themselves."

"How badly did they hurt him?!?" Remus asked, concern shining in his eyes as he thought of that small little boy who still held a piece of his heart.

James sighed. "Bad. Last night after his bath I cleaned his wounds. I almost died when he undressed and I saw his body. God, Moony, he has welts on his back and he's covered in bruises. It looks like someone took a belt to him or a bat, maybe both. I punched Vernon Dursley before I left but it's not enough. From what I could tell it was only Harry who was abused. Their son seemed in perfect condition, though he's a little chubby. Harry wasn't even well-fed. He didn't have any toys or any clothes of his own."

Remus nodded. "He'll be safe now, Prongs. We'll take good care of him. He won't ever have to go back to those horrible people again!"

James nodded. "I know. We've got to start school for him as well. I was hoping that you would help."

"You know I will. I think that we should teach him the stuff that he would learn in the muggle world as well. More than the basic math

and English skills. And of course basic wandless magic, no one teaches their kids that anymore.”

“Lily always said that she wanted him to learn that. The best of both worlds she calls it. Besides, if I start him early it will be easier for him to grasp everything when he’s older.”

Remus laughed. “We’ll take care of it. All we have to do is figure out where to start. And we should probably get some muggle things as well.”

James laughed. “Merlin, help us when we try to figure out how to use them!”

Remus grinned. “They can’t be that hard!”

\*\*\*\*\*

A few weeks after moving into Glasgow Hall, Harry still expected to wake up one morning and find himself back in the tiny cupboard under the stairs. But every morning he woke up in the huge bed with a small black stuffed dog that he had apparently loved when he was a baby. He liked to wake up knowing that it was lying in the big bed next to him.

But this morning, Harry was most anxious to go downstairs. A friend of his father’s was coming over and bringing a little boy for Harry to play with. Harry was a little scared as well though because he had never really had any friends before. Every time that he had attempted to make friends Dudley had scared them away. But Dudley wasn’t here anymore! He got dressed and hurried downstairs for some breakfast.

James grinned when he came into the room. “Good morning, Sport.”

“Hi Da,” Harry replied as he smiled up at Maddy as she poured him a bowl of oatmeal. “When are they coming over?”

James laughed. “They should be here any minute. Just eat your breakfast and be patient.”

Maddy nodded at Harry. "You better be eating all of that, Harry. It is good for you. It is making you strong."

Harry nodded. He had quickly figured out that it was impossible to argue with Maddy. She was like a mother hen and was constantly making sure that he was well taken care of. She did the exact same thing with both James and Remus. He had only eaten half of his breakfast when he heard sounds from the entrance hall, which meant that someone had flooded in.

He followed his father out and looked up at the old woman in front of him in alarm. She wore a dark green dress and had a huge vulture hat on top of her head. It was the ugliest and scariest looking hat that he had ever seen. The woman was pretty though, or had been at one time even if she now had wrinkles that lined her face. Her hair was dark brown streaked with grey, and she had blue eyes. Harry averted his attention to the tiny boy next to her.

He was small and a little chubby. He had dark brown hair and kind blue eyes. He gave Harry a small friendly wave and Harry waved back.

James grinned. "Augusta! I'm so glad that you made it. This is my son Harry. Harry, this is Mrs. Longbottom and her grandson Neville."

Harry nodded. "Nice to meet you."

Mrs. Longbottom smiled at him. "Nice to meet you too, dear."

James smiled. "Harry, why don't you take Neville up to your room to play?"

Harry nodded and he motioned for Neville to follow him upstairs. Once they were in his room, he pulled out his train set and some cars and people. "Want to play?"

Neville nodded. "Okay!"

They played quietly for a few minutes, getting into character as they

built a tiny village and played with the people. Then Neville spoke up.

"I like your house. It's really neat."

Harry smiled. "Thanks. I haven't lived here for very long. I had to live with my aunt and uncle. They were muggles."

Neville nodded. "Because your dad was taking care of your mum, right? My Gran told me."

"Yeah. She was really sick."

Neville nodded. "Gran says that it was safer for you to live with the muggles."

"I guess it was. Why do you live with your Gran?" Harry asked.

Neville sighed. "My mum and dad are really sick and they live at St. Mungo's so Gran takes care of me."

"I'm sorry. I hope they get better soon."

Neville nodded. "Me too. Hey, do you have any building blocks?"

"Yeah." Harry pulled them out of his toy chest. "Let's build a castle!"

"Okay and a hideout for the bad guys on the train."

Harry nodded eagerly and they spent the rest of the morning crashing things and building things. Both of them happily enjoying each other's company and not really understanding why they couldn't have both of their parents around them.

\*\*\*\*\*

On Harry's first Christmas with his Da and Uncle Moony, he was surprised to wake up in the morning and find gifts for him. The Dursleys had never once given him a present. He stood in the middle of the living room, looking at all of the gifts around the big tree in awe. James just grinned at him. He knew that he might have gone

overboard on the gifts, but he hadn't been able to stop himself.

"Well, Harry, where do you want to start?"

Harry looked shocked. "These are ALL for me?"

James nodded. "Every last one. Come on; let's start with the best one. This is from Uncle Remus too."

Harry nodded as he looked at the huge moving box that James had sat in front of him. There were holes poked in all of the sides of it. Harry carefully opened the box and grinned as a tiny black Labrador puppy jumped out and into his lap, licking his face in his excitement. "A puppy!"

James grinned. "Yeah, you'll have to take good care of him."

Harry grinned as he cuddled the tiny black bundle to him, tears rolling down his cheeks. No one had ever given him such a wonderful gift. The puppy was cuddled close and nuzzled his nose up to Harry, sliding his tongue over his cheek. "He's silly!"

"He certainly is a bit foolish. What are you going to name him?"

Remus grinned as he stepped into the room. "Well, if he's silly and foolish he should have a foolish name."

Harry grinned. "I'm going to name him Foolish."

James laughed. "Now that's an interesting name for a dog. Alright, Foolish it is."

The puppy seemed to accept this name because he let out a bark and jumped into James' lap. Foolish then jumped back down, ran around Remus' legs in circles and then slid on the floor, sliding into the plant in the corner before promptly peeing all over the floor.

"Hmm... I guess he needs to be trained up a bit." James replied as he quickly cleaned up the mess and scratched Foolish behind the ears.

Foolish barked happily and jumped into Harry's lap. Harry just grinned. This was his best Christmas ever.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry loved his new life living with his Da and Uncle Moony. James and Uncle Remus were the greatest in Harry's opinion. They taught him how to do wandless magic and harness his powers a bit since he wasn't suppose to use a wand yet. By the age of six, Harry could make fires, summon things, and make things move with only a thought. Of course, that was basic elemental magic that his Da said most people could do but a lot of people didn't bother to teach their kids anymore. Harry thought that it was great, making things move was his favourite. He especially liked to levitate Foolish from the floor to cuddle in his bed with him. James didn't seem to mind that he slept with the dog snuggled close every night. He also was taught all about Quidditch, his dad's favourite sport. He had been a natural-born flyer and James was thrilled when he realized his son's great seeking skills. Harry was well-equipped for all positions but he seemed to do best in seeking and chasing.

He had soon become a big fan of Scotland's Pride of Portree as well. He and James went to most of the games and Harry had gotten a new bedspread for his bed with a huge snitch on it that said he was a fan of Portree.

Remus was also helping Harry to harness his other skills. He bought books on muggle history, mathematics, geography, science, chemistry, sociology, biology, physics, Latin, English, French, philosophy, and literature. Harry studied it all, learning more than what he would have in a muggle primary school. He also studied magic. He read about the history of magic and a lot of basic spell books. James and Remus answered as many questions as they could for him, but he knew that once he was old enough to go to Hogwarts, he would learn it all.

Harry had convinced James to buy a television, a V.C.R., a computer, and a stereo as well as a Nintendo system. They would spend hours playing games and watching movies and listening to muggle music. They had watched some movies on martial arts, and when Harry had

expressed an interest in it, James had found an instructor to teach him. He started at the age of six and he learned quickly. By the time he was ten, he was a black-belt champion; his instructor was surprised at how quickly Harry had learned it. He also did a bit of studying on other forms of fighting. He never used it, but it was good exercise and he thought that it was fun. Especially when James and Remus would wrestle or fight with him!

Why was he learning so much about defence and about fighting at such a young age? Because Harry knew that at some point Voldemort would return to power and come after him. His Da and Uncle Remus wanted him to be as prepared as possible even though they prayed that he wouldn't have to face him for many years to come. But Harry didn't know the full-story. He remembered the story that his Da had told him about the prophecy but he didn't realize the full extent of it. Neither James nor Remus planned to tell him anytime soon. They wanted him to learn, to play, and to enjoy his childhood. And Remus still didn't know the full-extent of the prophecy as James had never shared that burden with him.

Since Harry was so famous, James didn't want him to be around magical children too much because of the awkwardness of the questions. He knew that he would get enough of that when he went to Hogwarts so every few days they would go to a muggle playground or water park or amusement park or to an arcade. Harry made a few friends there and he had fun playing with the friends that he made but he knew that he was different because he was wizard. Even the muggles in nearby parks were impressed since Harry lived in the famous Glasgow Hall, the huge mansion on the hill. Harry only shrugged at this and told them that Potter Manor, also known as Glasgow Hall; had been in his family for centuries. People were still amazed though which made him different from others. However, Neville Longbottom came over to play or Harry would go over at his house to play on a regular basis. The two had hit it off pretty quickly though Harry had trouble believing that Neville wasn't allowed to fly on a broomstick. Apparently, his Gran had thought that it was too dangerous (which made sense as Neville was extremely accident-prone). The two of them always found fun things to do though.

But his childhood with the Dursleys was not long forgotten as he was



loved and welcomed by his Da and his Uncle Remus. He sometimes was brought back to the childhood with the Dursleys in his dreams. But he would wake up, snug in his bedroom with Foolish curled up at his side and he would remember that he was loved and that he was safe. The scars on his back had mostly faded though he did have small white lines on his back in snatches. He knew that those scars would never fade, even if most of them had. The scars reminded him of his time with the Dursleys and made him remember always how lucky he was to be loved and so well cared for by his family.

He had met Albus Dumbledore only once and he had found him an odd guy with his long silver hair and beard and his twinkling blue eyes. He had also met a half-giant named Hagrid. Hagrid had become one of his favourite people because of his gentle nature and because he was fun to play with whenever he came over for a visit; especially because Hagrid was the tallest person that he knew. He knew that people called him the Boy Who Lived and when he met witches and wizards they would stare at him with awe and wonder. But James made sure that he wasn't in the spotlight and that he wouldn't get too full of himself. He wanted his son to have a normal childhood and he worked his hardest to make sure that he did. James worked as an Auror (having picked up his career again) and whenever he wasn't home Remus would keep Harry company, or he had Maddy and Mickey. Mickey would always play with him when he had a chance. James sometimes came home from work looking exhausted and was suddenly called back in. He was busy quite often during the day so Harry had to find things to amuse himself with during the day until his Da came home in the evenings.

Harry had also taken up reading as a past-time when he was alone. He liked mystery and suspense novels as well as science-fiction and historical-fiction. He had even read a few romantic-suspense but he quickly came to the conclusion that those weren't his style unless of course, he had nothing else to read. He had really become quite an avid reader! James told him that he got that from Lily as James never read anything but the newspaper.

But Harry was happy and he was loved so that by the time it was time for him to start up at Hogwarts, he was ready to go as a normal well-

loved child and his fame and wealth were the furthest things on his mind.

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## Chapter 5: Aboard the Hogwarts Express

**Author's Notes:** this chapter has a lot from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone in dialogue - i mixed in the book, the movie and my own perspective. i dont own the rights to the Hogwarts letter, the sorting hat song, or the school song - they all belong to the wonderfully talented JKR. i hope u enjoy it. please review. newly edited

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## Chapter V – Aboard the Hogwarts Express

On 31st July, 1991, Harry was beside himself with excitement. Today was his eleventh birthday and he would finally be getting his letter from Hogwarts. He knew that it had to come today; after all, school would be starting soon. He hurried down the stairs and grinned at James who was sitting at the kitchen table drinking a cup of coffee with his breakfast. Foolish was curled under the table at his feet hoping for scraps from the table.

“Morning Harry, and Happy Birthday!”

Harry grinned. “Morning Da, did the letter arrive yet?”

James laughed. “Yeah, it came. Here you go.” He handed his son the letter.

The yellowish envelope addressed in emerald green ink was sealed with a wax stamp with four symbols: a lion, a badger, an eagle, and a snake with a large letter H in the middle. Below it written in a ribbon were these words: *Draco dormiens nunquam titillandus*. Harry pointed to them. “What’s this mean again, Da?”

James grinned. "Don't you remember your Latin?"

He had taken Latin lessons, mostly reading it and proper pronunciation as James had told him that most spells were in Latin and this would help him out when it came to learning them. But he had taken the lessons years ago so he really had to think to remember them. Harry stared at it for a minute, trying to bring his Latin lessons back to mind and then he grinned. "*Never tickle a sleeping dragon.*"

James grinned. "Exactly. That's the school motto you know. Well, open the letter."

Harry grinned as he opened the seal and pulled out the parchment and began to read out loud:

## **HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY**

**Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore (Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf. Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)**

**Dear Mr. Potter,**

**We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment.**

**Term begins on 1 September. We await your owl by no later than 31 July.**

**Yours Sincerely,**

**Minerva McGonagall  
Deputy Headmistress**

He slipped the paper behind and began to read the second sheet:

## **HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY**

## **Uniform**

**First year students require:**

- 1. Three sets of plain work robes (black)**
- 2. One plain pointed hat (black) for day wear**
- 3. One pair of protective gloves (dragon hide or similar)**
- 4. One winter cloak (black, silver fastenings)**

**Please note that all pupils' clothes should carry nametags.**

## **Set Books**

**All students should have a copy of each of the following:**

***The Standard Book of Spells Grade One* by Miranda Goshawk**

***A History of Magic* by Bathilda Bagshot**

***Magical Theory* by Adalbert Waffling**

***A Beginner's Guide to Transfiguration* by Emeric Switch**

***One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi* by Phyllida Spore**

***Magical Drafts and Potions* by Arsenius Jigger**

***Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* by Newt Scamander**

***The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection* by Quentin Trimble**

## **Other Equipment**

**1 wand**

**1 cauldron (pewter standard, size 2)**

**1 set glass or crystal phials**

**1 telescope**

**1 set brass scales**

**Students may also bring an owl OR a cat OR a toad.**

**PARENTS ARE REMINDED THAT FIRST YEAR STUDENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED THEIR OWN BROOMSTICKS**

Harry grinned and he quickly sent his acceptance letter with his dad's old owl, Potts.

James grinned. "We'll go shopping after breakfast for your school things. I'll have to get you an owl too so that you can write to me."

Harry's grin widened. "Brilliant!"

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### ***1st September, 1991 ...***

Harry walked through the barrier to Platform Nine and  $\frac{3}{4}$  with James and his Uncle Remus. His new snowy owl named Hedwig that Hagrid had bought him as a birthday present sat in her cage. Hagrid was an old friend of his Da and Uncle Remus. He had actually been the one to bring Harry from the rubble in Godric's Hollow and James always said that Hagrid was like another honorary uncle. He looked up at the train in awe.

Remus grinned. "Well, Harry, are you ready to begin your magical education?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah!"

James grinned. "Remember what I said about the Marauder's Map, if you ever get a hold of it... last I remember the caretaker confiscated it."

Harry laughed. He knew all about the trouble that the Marauders had caused. He hugged his Da, and Uncle Remus goodbye, and then he stepped up onto the train. He wondered where Neville might be briefly before turning his attention back to his trunk. Two identical boys with red hair and tons of freckles approached him as he tried to drag his trunk up the stairs.

"Want a hand?" One of them asked.

"Yes, please." Harry panted.

"Oi, Fred! C'mere and help!"

With the twins' help, Harry's trunk was at last tucked away in a corner of the compartment.

"Thanks." Harry replied, pushing his sweaty hair out of his eyes.

"What's that?" One of the twins asked as they pointed at his lightning bolt scar.

“Blimey,” the other twin replied. “Are you—?”

“He is! Aren’t you?”

“What?” Harry asked, already knowing what was coming. His Da and Uncle Remus had warned him after all.

“Harry Potter!” The twins said together.

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I am.”

The twins gawked at him, and Harry was relieved when he heard a woman call out ‘Fred, George’ and the twins disappeared. He looked out the window at his Da and Uncle Remus and pointed to his scar and then the twins. James nodded and pulled a small mirror out of his pocket. Harry grinned, and pulled out a similar one. James had told him that he and Sirius had used them at Hogwarts when they had been in separate detentions. James had given it to him only that morning, so that he could always talk to him when he was away at school.

“Da,” Harry replied and his father’s face appeared in the mirror.

James grinned. “Already famous?”

Harry laughed. “They just sort of stared at me when they recognized my scar. Is everyone going to do that?”

James nodded. “I’m afraid so, Bud, there’s nothing that I can do. The best bet would be to ignore it. Don’t make a big deal out of it.”

Harry nodded. “Alright. Well, bye then.”

James smiled. “Owl me at the end of the week, I want to know all about your first week of school. Have a good term.” Then, he was gone.

Harry tucked his mirror into his pocket, and glanced down at the twins again. He realized that the entire family had bright red hair. His eyes

landed on a small girl with pretty brown eyes and bright red hair. She was holding her mum's hand tightly and crying. She seemed sad that her brothers were leaving. He heard the twins mention that they had met him, and he tore his gaze away from the window and closed his eyes.

A few minutes later he looked up when the youngest redheaded boy walked in. "Anyone sitting there?" he asked, pointing at the seat opposite of Harry. "Everywhere else is full."

Harry shook his head, and the boy sat down. The compartment door opened again and the twins were there.

"Hey Ron, listen we're going down to the middle of the train— Lee Jordan's got a giant tarantula down there!"

"Right," Ron mumbled.

"Harry," one of the twins replied. "Did we introduce ourselves? Fred and George Weasley. And this is our brother, Ron. See you later, then."

"Bye," Harry and Ron both replied as the twins left.

Ron looked at Harry for a moment before he spoke. "So, you're really Harry Potter then?"

"Yup."

"Oh," Ron replied, as if he was slightly taken aback. "I thought it was one of Fred and George's jokes. Have you really got... you know?"

"What?" Harry asked. He was already getting tired of the unwanted attention. When Ron only pointed to Harry's forehead, Harry pushed his hair out his eyes to show the scar.

"Is that where You-Know-Who-?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, but I don't remember anything."

“Nothing?” Ron asked eagerly.

“No, well, I remember a lot of green light, but that’s it.”

“Wow.” Ron replied, before he turned his attention outside for a moment. When he looked back at Harry, he quickly changed the subject. “So, your dad’s an Auror right?”

Harry nodded; glad that the subject had changed. “Yeah, and Da says my mum was too.”

“That’s cool. An Auror is one of the greatest jobs in the world, I think.” Ron said. “The only Auror I know is Mad Eye Moody though, and he’s kind of creepy.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah I suppose he is. I only met him once. He’s been retired for a long time though. So, do you know loads of magic already, you know, with having two older brothers?”

Ron shook his head. “No, only what they teach you at home. And I don’t have two older brothers, I have five. I’m the sixth in our family to go to Hogwarts. You could say that I’ve got a lot to live up to. Bill and Charlie have already left– Bill was Head Boy and Charlie was Quidditch captain. Now Percy’s a Prefect. Fred and George mess around a lot, but they still get really good marks, and everyone thinks they’re really funny. Everyone expects me to do as well as the others, but if I do, it’s no big deal, because they did it first. You never get anything new, either, with five brothers. I’ve got Bill’s old robes, Charlie’s old wand, and Percy’s old rat.” He pulled the rat out of his pocket. “This is Scabbers, he’s useless.”

Harry smiled. “I’m sure he’s alright. I just got this owl, so I can write home. Da says that I have to write every week, or he’s going to worry. I think it might be just as bad being the first and only to go to Hogwarts, because he’ll expect a lot, you know? Oh well, we’ll muddle through it all together.”

Ron grinned. “Yeah, muddling sounds okay. What’s the owl’s name?”

Harry turned to smile at his new snowy friend proudly. “Hedwig. She’s



beautiful isn't she? I found the name in one of the textbooks I was skimming through."

They talked for hours after that. Harry learned all about Ron's family, and he told him about his Da, Uncle Remus, and his dog Foolish. When the trolley came around at noon, he was starving and bought a handful of sweets. They spent some time sorting through the chocolate frog cards and talking about their collections. It turned out that Ron had over five hundred. Harry couldn't believe that! He had never really gotten into collecting the cards and only had a few of them.

A little while later a round-faced boy came into the compartment looking tearful. Harry recognized him immediately, even though he hadn't seen him in almost a year. "Hey Nev."

Neville looked up in surprise. "Harry, how are you?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm alright."

"You didn't happen to see a toad, did you?"

They shook their heads no, and he looked worried as he began to mumble about never finding him and left the compartment.

"How do you know him?" Ron asked.

Harry shrugged. "I've known him since I was little. My Da knows his grandmother. He's a cool bloke, a bit forgetful though. I wonder how he lost his toad?"

Ron looked down at Scabbers who was buried in a Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans box. "Sometimes I wish that I would lose Scabbers. Pathetic, isn't he? Fred and George taught me a spell to turn him yellow. It didn't work the first time I tried it. Want to see?"

Harry grinned. "Sure!" He couldn't wait to actually start doing magic. The wandless magic that James and Remus had taught him was basic stuff, elemental that James said a lot of wizarding families never even bothered with anymore. But he was anxious to actually

use his wand and to do what he considered to be real magic.

Ron cleared his throat loudly just as the compartment door opened again. There stood a girl with bushy brown hair, brown eyes, and rather large front teeth. When she spoke, her voice sounded bossy.

“Have either of you seen a toad? A boy named Neville’s lost one.”

“No,” Ron replied. “We’ve already told him we haven’t seen it.”

The girl wasn’t paying attention though; she was looking at his wand. “Oh, are you going to do magic then. Let’s see it.”

Ron glanced at Harry and rolled his eyes, making him grin. Then he cleared his throat again before he began. “Sunshine, daises, butter mellow; turn this stupid fat rat yellow.”

Nothing happened.

“Are you sure that that’s a real spell?!?!” The girl asked, her voice taking on that bossy quality. “Well, it’s not very good is it? I’ve only tried a few simple ones myself but they’ve all worked for me. Nobody in my family is magic at all, it was such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course, I mean, it’s the very best school of witchcraft there is, I’ve heard– I’ve learnt all our set books by heart, of course, I just hope it will be enough– I’m Hermione Granger, by the way, and you are?”

She said all of this very fast, and Harry was relieved to see the stricken look on Ron’s face, which told him that he hadn’t learnt all of the set books by heart either.

“Ron Weasley.”

“Harry Potter.”

“Are you really?” Hermione asked in awe. “I know all about you of course– I got a few extra books for background reading and you’re in *Modern Magical History*, *The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts*, and *Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century*.”

“Am I?” Harry asked, quite glad that his Da had never told him that. It was a little intimidating.

Hermione began to ramble on some more about school houses and Neville and about how they should be getting dressed because they would be arriving soon. Then she left them alone.

A little bit later the compartment door opened again. This time a pale blonde boy and two huge boys that reminded Harry of bodyguards came in.

“Is it true?” The blonde boy asked. “They’re saying all down the train that Harry Potter’s in this compartment. So it’s you, then?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I’m Harry Potter.”

The boy waved his hand at the two boys next to him. “This is Crabbe, and Goyle. I’m Malfoy, Draco Malfoy.”

Ron snickered at the name, and Malfoy’s eyes frosted over.

“Think my name’s funny, do you? No need to ask who you are. My father told me that all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles, and more children than they can afford.” He turned back to Harry, ignoring Ron, whose face had turned a deep red. “You’ll soon find out that some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help you there.” He held out his hand with a cocky smirk on his face.

Harry looked down at the hand, his eyes flashed angrily. The boy had just insulted the first friend that he made at Hogwarts. He kept his voice cool, as he ignored the hand. “I think I can tell who the wrong sort are for myself, thanks.”

Draco’s face paled a bit. “I’d be a bit more careful if I was you, Potter, or you’ll meet the same sticky end as your mother. Especially if you hang out with riff-raff like the Weasleys.”

“Say that again!” Ron demanded, his face still beet red.

Malfoy smirked. "Going to fight us, Weasley?"

Before Ron could respond, Scabbers jumped up and bit Crabbe's finger. He yelled and shook the rat off, where he hit the wall, slumping down on the seat, and, surprisingly, going back to sleep.

Malfoy turned and gesturing to Crabbe and Goyle, they left the compartment.

Harry looked over at Ron and sighed, his first day was definitely giving him something to think about.

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When they arrived at the train station, Harry grinned when he heard the familiar voice of Rubeus Hagrid. Hagrid stood close to eight feet tall, and had black beetle eyes, and lots of scraggly long brown hair. Harry knew that he looked fierce but he was a softie, especially when it came to animals. He followed Ron into one of the small boats as they made their way towards the castle, and Harry got his first close look at Hogwarts.

The castle was huge, and had many towers and turrets. He had remembered seeing it from a distance when he stopped in Hogsmeade with his Da from time to time. Soon they were standing in the entrance hall and a severe looking woman with dark brown hair that had streaks of grey through it that was pulled back in a tight bun stood in front of them. She introduced herself as Professor Minerva McGonagall, head of Gryffindor house, and the transfiguration teacher. She then explained about the sorting, and brought them into the Great Hall.

As they stood in a line waiting to see what would happen, Professor McGonagall placed an old faded hat on the stool. The hat's brim opened wide into a mouth and to Harry's surprise, the hat began to sing:

*Oh you may not think me pretty,  
But don't judge on what you see,*

*I'll eat myself if you can find  
A smarter hat than me.  
You can keep your bowlers black,  
Your top hats sleek and tall,  
For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat,  
And I can cap them all.  
There's nothing hidden in your head  
The Sorting Hat can't see,  
So try me on and I will tell you  
Where you ought to be.*

*You might belong in Gryffindor,  
Where dwell the brave at heart,  
Their daring, nerve, and chivalry  
Set Gryffindors apart;  
You might belong in Hufflepuff,  
Where they are just and loyal,  
Those patient Hufflepuffs are true  
And unafraid of toil;  
Or yet in wise old Ravenclaw,  
If you've a ready mind,  
Where those of wit and learning,  
Will always find their kind;  
Or perhaps in Slytherin  
You'll make your real friends,  
Those cunning folks use any means  
To achieve their ends.*

*So put me on! Don't be afraid!  
And don't get in a flap!  
You're in safe hands (though I have none)  
For I'm a Thinking Cap!*

Everyone applauded at the end of the song and Professor McGonagall began to call out the names. To Harry's great delight, he was sorted into Gryffindor (though he did argue with the Sorting Hat about it, which for some reason wanted to put him in Slytherin) with Ron and Neville and, to Ron's disgust, Hermione! He listened to Dumbledore's words before he enjoyed the fantastic feast.

When the feast was over, Dumbledore stood up and asked everyone to sing the school song. The words appeared in a ribbon above the hall and everyone began to sing (Fred and George in a funeral March tune):

*Hogwarts, Hogwarts, Hoggy Warty Hogwarts,  
Teach us something, please,  
Whether we be old or bald  
Or young with scabby knees,  
Our heads could do with filling  
With some interesting stuff,  
For now they're bare and full of air,  
Dead flies and bits of fluff,  
So teach us things worth knowing,  
Bring back what we've forgot,  
Just do your best, we'll do the rest,  
And learn until our brains all rot!*

By the time Harry entered his dormitory and was snug in his bed, he was smiling. Hogwarts was going to be wonderful. He fell asleep thinking that.

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Classes started the next day and he got into the swing of things quickly. Most of the teachers made some comment on his name. Professor Flitwick for example, the Charms teacher, was so excited that he fell off the pile of books he stood on to see over his desk. But there was one teacher who was not amused to see him. The Potions master, Professor Severus Snape. Harry had no idea why Snape seemed to hate him so much, but from the beginning, Harry understood that the man hated him on sight.

He pushed it out his mind as best as he could and instead concentrated on his classes and on his new friends. He soon learned, however, that Draco Malfoy was going to be another problem. He had never thought that he would hate anyone the way that he had hated the Dursleys. He still remembered snatches of his childhood with

them, and every once and a while a nightmare would strike him back into that time, but Malfoy reminded him of Dudley. He was a bully, except unlike Dudley, he didn't fight; he had Crabbe and Goyle to do it for him. So when the sign went up for flying lessons, Harry could only groan when he noticed that they would be learning with the Slytherins.

By the end of the week, Harry had lots to tell his Da and Uncle Remus. They had written him a few times, but Harry had yet to send them a letter. So Sunday afternoon, he set to work:

*Dear Da and Uncle Remus,*

*Sorry I haven't written yet, but I have been quite busy. So let me start from the beginning. The train ride was fun. After I met the twins, the ones who first noticed my scar and made a big deal about it, I met their younger brother, Ron, who is also a first year. Fred and George Weasley are his older brothers who are in third year. Ron's really great and he comes from an old pureblood wizarding family as well, but he's definitely not snobbish about it like Uncle Remus says Sirius' parents were so long ago. Anyway, we hit it off right away and now we're pretty much best mates. I can't wait for you to meet him. He has five older brothers and one younger sister! That's insane! Can you imagine having that big of a family? He's really cool though, and I think that you'll like him. His oldest brother's name is Bill and he works in Egypt as a curse breaker. His brother Charlie apparently works with wild dragons in Romania. Percy is in fifth year and he's a prefect. Fred and George are in third year and from what I can tell they are mischief makers. Then he has a younger sister, but I don't know her name as she's not old enough to go to Hogwarts yet.*

*I did meet one boy though that I can't stand. It was like an instant hatred. He turned out to be sorted in Slytherin (Ron is in Gryffindor with me). His name is Draco Malfoy, and he's a pureblood snob. He came into our compartment like he owned the place, and looked at Ron in disgust. He actually said that he didn't need to be introduced to him because his father had told him that the Weasleys all had red hair, freckles, and more children than they could afford. Ron looked like he had been slapped. Then he turns to me and goes into this spiel about how he can help me make friends with the right people,*

*and that I shouldn't hang around with people like Ron. I told him that I could sort out my own friends. We've been enemies ever since. He hates my guts now, probably because I didn't want to be his friend. Anyway, he's a prat! But guess what? He did help me accomplish something incredible!! I'm the Gryffindor Quidditch team's new seeker!*

*I know I'm only a first year. But I swear it's true!*

*Okay, Neville Longbottom (I'm sure you remember him, he looks the same and all, though we haven't been to his house in about two years — hint hint nudge nudge), he's still really forgetful and really clumsy, so his Gran sent him a Remembrall. Well, during flying lessons, his broom went crazy and he got hurt so Madam Hooch had to take him to the hospital wing. Malfoy stole the Remembrall and started making fun of Neville, so I told him to give it back. He dared me to catch him and he flew off on the broom. Now Madam Hooch told us that anyone who was caught flying while she was gone would be expelled. This really annoying and bossy girl named Hermione Granger started lecturing me as soon as Malfoy took off, but I don't know, I guess I wasn't thinking, because I took off after him. He was worried when he realized that I can fly better than him and while he was up in the air, he wasn't flanked by his bodyguards, two boys named Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle; so anyway, he throws the Remembrall in the opposite direction. I dived for it, I don't know, it was impulse. It was a fifty-foot dive and I caught it in my hand. Everyone was cheering me on, and it was great, but then Professor McGonagall came out, and she was calling my name. I thought I was going to be expelled!*

*She brings me over to Professor Quirrell's class and asked for Wood. The next thing I know, she's introducing me to this fifth year boy named Oliver Wood, who is captain of the Gryffindor Quidditch team! She tells him that I'm a brilliant flyer, and that I caught the Remembrall in a fifty-foot dive and that I should be the seeker! She says that she can convince Dumbledore to bypass the first year rule! So I'm in! I'm the youngest Quidditch player in over a century! Can you believe it? I'm so excited! The first practice isn't for a while yet though, but I need my broom, Da! So can you send it to me please?*



*Also, there's this teacher here, he teaches potions and he hates my guts. Ron just thinks that I'm imagining things, but I swear, he really seems to hate me. His name is Professor Severus Snape, and I don't even know what I did wrong, but ever since I first walked into his classroom, he's treated me terribly. Always telling me I'm arrogant, and just because I'm famous doesn't mean that I'm going to get special treatment. Like I even asked for that! Anyway, I don't like him. He's a slimy git too. He's got this greasy black hair, and he struts around in his black robes. He's head of Slytherin house too, and he favours the Slytherins badly.*

*I've got some other news, too. I don't know whether it's good or bad though, kind of scary really. Anyway, long story, but I got myself conned into a midnight duel with Malfoy. So Ron and I snuck out to go meet him in the trophy room. Hermione tried to stop us while going on and on about breaking school rules and not appreciating Gryffindor, she's a know-it-all, and super annoying! Though she doesn't bug me nearly as much as she bugs Ron; she drives him crazy! She's muggleborn and is so smart, but really, I mean, what right does she have to boss us around all the time? Anyway, the Fat Lady wasn't there so she came with us because she didn't want to get caught. Then we ran into Neville who had come back from the hospital wing late and forgot the password—he never remembers—so, he ended up coming with us too. Anyway, naturally Malfoy didn't show up but he must have snitched to Filch, because he was there, so we ran for it. We ended up on the third floor in the forbidden corridor. We hurry behind this locked door and there's this giant three-headed dog standing on a trap door! We decided Filch was safer and ran for it. We didn't get caught though. Hermione thinks that the dog is guarding something. Anyway, Ron and I just want to know what the hell it's doing there! But that's obviously why that corridor is forbidden!*

*It's been an exciting week so far. My lessons are interesting enough, but hard work. I'll write more if I find anything out about that dog! And no sign of the map yet, but I'll hold out for it. I hope everything is going well for both of you, and I was wondering how Foolish is doing without me? I miss him!*

Love,  
Harry

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## Chapter 6: First Year

**Author's Notes:** please review - the story will get better but im going to probably use letters like this for a brief summary of each year. i hope u like it. newly edited

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### Chapter VI – First Year

Dear Harry,

Congratulations! I knew that you would be an awesome Quidditch player, after all, just look at me. If you didn't take after me, I would be shocked. If Lily were here right now, she would be saying 'Ego, James, ego', but meh, I don't care. I was a damn good Quidditch player and I'll admit it. Also, congrats for getting into Gryffindor. It sounds like you've had some pretty exciting adventures so far. If you find that map it will be easier and you will have a less chance of being caught.

I think I know why your potions professor hates you as well. Remember all those Marauder stories Moony and I told you, well... there was this one kid, I'm sure you remember, we used to call him Snivelis... yeah, his real name is Severus Snape. He holds a grudge against me, Harry, don't worry about it, and ignore him as much as you can. There's nothing that you can do since he's a teacher. But everything should be alright otherwise. Though I have no idea how a git like him became a teacher, but that's beside the point.

It sounds like you've met some great friends. Neville Longbottom, yes I do remember him. In fact I just ran into his Gran yesterday in Diagon Alley. I'm glad that you're still friendly

with him. We just haven't had the time to get over and see him in a while have we? Augusta is a hard woman, and I can only imagine how hard it was for Neville to grow up with her. From what I've heard, she's never really gotten over what happened to Alice and Frank. Also, I'm glad that you stood up to Malfoy and defended Neville. That's exactly what good friends do for each other. I'm proud of you.

Ron Weasley sounds like a nice kid too. I know his dad briefly; he works at the Ministry with me. I'll have to go introduce myself again. I believe his name is Arthur. This Hermione girl does sound a bit annoying, but I'm sure it won't last. Peter was super annoying but he grew on us.

Not too much has been going on here. I've been working a bit of overtime and Moony has been busy researching his furry little problem. He is determined to find a cure, and I believe that one day he will. I've also been thinking about redecorating some of the rooms in the East Wing. I know that we don't really use them, but if we don't take care of them they will fall apart so I'm working on some plans. We'll see how it goes.

Moony is pleased with your letter as well. We hope to hear from you soon.

Love,  
Da

P.S. Foolish does miss you terribly, he cried the first night, but I think he's alright now – I let him sleep in my bed.

*Dear Da,*

*Hermione has grown on us. On Halloween someone let a troll in, and we were all ordered to go back to our dorms, but then I remembered that Lavender Brown said that Hermione was crying in the girls' bathroom. Ron said something about her being bossy and not having any friends and she ran off in tears. Anyway, I told Ron, and we both felt guilty because we sort of made her cry by talking about her like that. We hurried off in the opposite direction to warn her about the*

troll. Well, the troll found its way into the girls' bathroom! Hermione was hiding but the troll was trying to hit her with its huge club! I jumped at it and ended up sticking my wand up its nose, not that that did anything of course. Then I yelled at Ron to do something and he yelled the first spell to come into his head—Wingardium Leviosa—the club flew from his hand and smacked the troll over the head, knocking him out.

Professor McGonagall came rushing in and was completely shocked and angry. She lectured for a bit and demanded to know why we were there. Then Hermione told her that she had gone looking for the troll, and that if Ron and I hadn't come and saved her, she would be dead. I couldn't believe it—she told an out-right lie to a teacher! Well, I guess there are just some situations that cause you to become instant friends.

That was one of them.

Also, the first Quidditch game of the season! We won! Thanks so much for sending me a Nimbus Two Thousand—I never expected a new broom, Da! But thanks! Of course, you saw the game so you know how brilliant it was, even though I had that minor problem of falling off my broom. We figured out how that happened by the way — Snape tried to kill me!

It all started this morning, when we noticed that he was limping; his leg was all bloody and mangled. Ron, Hermione and I think that he was trying to get past that three-headed-dog on Halloween, and that he let the troll in as a diversion. Well, after that we had Quidditch and my broom started acting funny, like it was trying to buck me off. I was barely hanging on. You saw it! Well, Hermione said that Snape was staring at me and muttering under his breath like he was cursing me or something. Well, then she set his robes on fire, and he lost his concentration so I got back onto my broom, and, I caught the snitch! We won!!

We went to go talk to Hagrid afterwards, and told him that we suspected Snape. It turns out that he owns that three-headed dog and that his name is Fluffy—stupid name for a monster! But then again, Hagrid always was weird. Well, after that he told us that what the dog

*is guarding is strictly between Dumbledore and Nicholas Flamel, whoever that is. Hagrid is easy to get information out of, even if he does have weird taste in pets.*

*I'm glad that you're letting Foolish sleep with you Da, he must be lonely. Just don't push him off the bed, he gets mad and I've seen the way you sleep! I have no idea how Mum ever managed to stay in bed with you! She probably ended up on the floor a million times! But then again I remember Uncle Remus telling me that you used to always be in some weird sleeping position or on the floor when you were at Hogwarts too. I'm glad I don't sleep like you — though Ron could give you a run for your money!*

*Love,  
Harry*

*P.S. Can I stay at Hogwarts for Christmas? Ron's parents are going to Romania, to visit his brother, Charlie, and I don't want him to be alone.*

**Dear Harry,**

**I'm glad that you like the new broom. It was Remus' idea. We were so proud that you made the team, and we're glad that you won the first match. But Snape tried to buck you off the broom? Are you sure about that? That's a serious accusation, not that I wouldn't put it past him. Snivelis always was a greasy-haired git. Tell your friend Hermione that I'm glad she set his robes on fire. I only wish I would have seen it. I was bit distracted however, by the fact that my eleven-year-old-son was barely holding onto his broom! Brilliant by the way, you did some excellent flying out there!**

**Neither Moony nor I are the least bit surprised that Hagrid owns Fluffy. Hagrid always did like dangerous creatures for as long as I've known him. Nicholas Flamel was Dumbledore's mentor. He created something to do with immortality, but I can't remember what it was. Don't worry too much about it. It doesn't concern you.**

**Congrats on knocking out a mountain troll. I got the letter from McGonagall informing me of your Halloween adventure. Tell your friend Ron I said good job, too. Knocking him out with his own club, very clever. Moony thought it was pretty funny as did I, and we said as much to McGonagall, but she wasn't impressed. In fact, she mentioned something about like father like son ... makes me proud!**

**I'm still debating a bit on those rooms in the East Wing. I decided it won't be anything extravagant but maybe some new flooring and paint or wallpaper. I don't know; we'll see ... I don't think decorating is really my skill. We'll have to see how it goes. Basically, I'm leaving most of it up to Maddy. I just want everything to stay maintained and well ... nice.**

**Keep me posted on that trapdoor, but don't get into too much trouble.**

**Love,  
Da**

**P.S. Of course you can stay. If that's what you want. But next time, just invite him over. And about Foolish... I only LET him stay in my bed for one night, the other nights he just helped himself, so he can't blame me for anything!**

*Dear Da,*

*Thanks for the cloak. Dumbledore sent it to me, but it's technically from you. He said that you had given it to him a long time ago, and asked him to return it after you came out of hiding. He said that he just found it and thought that I might like it. An invisibility cloak! That is so brilliant! I used it right away to look in the restricted section of the library—we're trying to find something on Nicholas Flamel.*

*I got nothing.*

*Anyway, I was running from Filch and Mrs. Norris when I found myself in this room with this huge mirror (this is when I was under the cloak after my library trip), when I look in it I see you, me, and Mum.*

*She was really beautiful. I showed it to Ron, so that he could see my mum but he couldn't see her, instead he saw himself as Head Boy and Quidditch captain. I didn't understand it.*

*Across the top of the mirror it said: Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on whosi. It's kind of clever actually because if you read it backwards it says: I show not your face but your heart's desire.*

*Anyway, I kept going back to look every day and one night, Dumbledore was there.*

*I didn't get in trouble though. He told me that it was the Mirror of Erised, and it shows the deepest, most desperate desires in the person's heart. So I guess mine is to have my mum back in my life, so that the three of us can be a real family.*

*Ron's been teaching me how to play Wizard's Chess. I'm terrible. Though he is really good, and Fred and George say that the only person who can beat him is their brother Bill, so maybe it's just a losing matter. I suspect that I wouldn't have lost so badly if his brother Percy hadn't been trying to help me out either.*

*I've been having some bad dreams lately; about the night that Voldemort came. I don't remember much, just some laughter and lots of green light. I wonder why the dreams are coming back now?*

*And worst of all—Snape is the referee for the next match! What if he tries to pull something again?? Pray for me, Da.*

*Love,  
Harry*

**Dear Harry,**

**I forgot about the cloak as well. I'm sure that you'll get lots of use out of it. I remember how useful I found it when I was at school. The Marauders had many adventures under that thing, and well ... it did come in handy for dates as well, something that you might discover in a few years. In fact, I think Sirius and I used it once to play some pranks on Snape. To this day, I don't**

think he ever managed to prove that it was us. It was a good one too — I think we tied his feet together and made him hop down the hall while singing the Beach Boys. Naturally, we made sure that there was a crowd. Ah ... blissful memories of torturing Snape. Alright, I'm good now.

I'm sorry about what you see in the mirror. I wish that your mum was here with us too. I miss her more than anything else in the world. She's a wonderful person and a wonderful mum, and yes she's very beautiful. The photos we have of her just don't do her beauty justice. She's the love of my life and I will always love her. I wish that she was around to see how wonderful you've turned out, though I know that she's watching us, and probably frowning a bit on some of my parenting techniques. She always did say I was an irresponsible prat—but she loved me. And I know that she loves you very much.

Don't worry about the Wizard's Chess—some people are good at it, and some people aren't. I'm terrible so don't expect to practice on me, you'll just destroy me. Though I think Moony used to be pretty good at it. He would probably enjoy a good game of chess and he can teach you some moves to try to beat your friend there.

I don't know why your dreams are coming back. You must have been self-consciously remembering since you saw Lily in the mirror. I wouldn't worry about it, but I'm glad that you told me.

Don't worry about Snape; he's not going to hurt you. I have Dumbledore's word that he will be at the next match. You're safe.

Love,  
Da

P.S. I'm coming to the next match as well. Dumbledore gave me permission to come watch the game again so I'll see you soon!

*Dear Da,*

*We found Nicholas Flamel! He is the only known maker of the*



*Philosopher's Stone! Now we know why Snape wants it—immortality and gold! I hope that he doesn't get his hands on it!*

*Something great happened during the match—Ron and Neville got into a fight with Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle—that's amazing for Neville, we told him to stand up for himself. I guess he took us seriously. You missed that though. Why did you leave the match early?*

*I also heard Snape talking to Professor Quirrell in the Forbidden Forest—I was flying over it after the match—he knows how to get to the stone! He was demanding of Quirrell to tell him about his defence, and if he knew how to get past Fluffy. This only confirms my suspicions! He is not only after the stone, but he's almost got all of the clues figured out! As to the clues we know that there is an obstacle by Hagrid, Professor Sprout, Professor Flitwick, Professor McGonagall, Professor Quirrell, Professor Snape, and Professor Dumbledore. It can't be a good sign for him to know most of the clues already!*

*On another note—Hagrid had a dragon—a Norwegian Ridgeback, to be exact! He won it from someone at the pub. We tried to tell him that he can't raise a dragon! I mean, he lives in a wooden house! But he was all for it, and wouldn't listen to a word we said. The dragon hatched and he named him Norbert. He's weird sometimes. But Malfoy saw it, so we had to get rid of it. We wrote to Ron's brother, Charlie, who works with dragons in Romania. He agreed to take Norbert. We had to sneak him up to the top of the Astronomy Tower. Ron's hand was hurt because of the dragon so Hermione and I went alone. We were so stupid though—we were so happy to see Norbert go that I forgot the cloak at the top of the tower! We were caught by McGonagall.*

*It turns out that Neville heard Malfoy's story about the dragon, and tried to warn us, but he got lost. So we got detention and we lost 50 points each! It was terrible! The only good thing was that Malfoy got detention as well! But we lost 150 points for Gryffindor in one go!*

*And I heard Snape talking to Quirrell again—I think he knows how to get the stone now. I'm really worried about him getting it.*

*My detention was going into the Forbidden Forest with Hagrid. It*

*wasn't so bad, but Malfoy scared Neville, so I got stuck with him. Hagrid said that there is something bad in the forest, something that's killing the unicorns and drinking their blood. I found out what it is—Voldemort. Firenze, this centaur, saved me from this thing that I saw drinking unicorn blood. As soon as I got near, my scar exploded on my head; it was like nothing that I had ever felt before. Pain beyond all reason. My scar has never hurt like that before! I mean it twinged a bit when Snape was giving me particularly evil look once, but that's it! Anyway, Firenze told me that Voldemort was in the forest, and that it is a crime to slay a unicorn, and that the person who drinks their blood lives a half-life or a cursed life. Now I know that Snape wants to steal the stone for Voldemort. I can't let that happen, Da.*

*If I suspect anything else, I'll tell Dumbledore right away. Well, Hermione is bugging me to study for my exams now, so I'll talk to you later.*

*Love,  
Harry*

**Dear Harry,**

**DON'T YOU DARE GO AFTER THAT STONE YOURSELF! IF IT WAS JUST SNAPE I WOULDN'T BE WORRIED, BUT I DO NOT WANT YOU ANYWHERE NEAR VOLDEMORT!! I'M NOT EVEN SURE HOW VOLDEMORT COULD HAVE BEEN IN THAT FOREST, HE DOESN'T HAVE A BODY! I WANT YOU TO GO TO DUMBLEDORE RIGHT AWAY!!**

**Love,  
Da**

**P.S. I'm sorry that I had to leave the match early but I was on call for work and something came up in one of the cases I was working on. You were brilliant, but I knew you would be. Good game!**

**\*\*\*\*\***

Harry woke up in the hospital wing a week later with James slumped

in a chair next to his bed. James' hair was tousled more than usual, as if he had been dragging his fingers through it in frustration. His glasses had slid down his nose and his eyes were closed. He put his glasses back on and grinned at his father. "Da?"

James woke instantly and sat up, running his hand over the rough beard and moustache that had formed on his face. "Harry, Merlin, I was so worried. You're okay?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. Ron and Hermione?"

"They're alright, but you have a lot of explaining to do." He sat on the edge of the bed and pulled Harry close and into a tight hug. "Are you alright?"

Harry nodded as Dumbledore came into the room. "Ah, finally awake, Harry?"

Harry nodded. "Yes, sir. It was Quirrell! He tried to steal the stone and—"

Dumbledore held up his hand to silence Harry. "You are behind the times, my boy. Everything is good and the stone is safe. My friend Nicholas and I have had a little chat. We destroyed the stone. Nicholas and his wife have enough elixir left to put their affairs in order. You got to the stone in time."

Harry looked up at Dumbledore quizzically, as he felt James squeeze his hand. "But they'll die, won't they?"

Dumbledore smiled. "Harry, when you get to be as old as they are, death is just the next great adventure." He smiled as he reached down to pick up a chocolate frog card. "Tokens from your friends and admirers. Everything that happened between you and Professor Quirrell is a complete secret, so, naturally, the whole school knows. I believe the Weasley twins tried to send you a toilet seat in hopes that it would amuse you, but Madam Pomfrey confiscated it for sanitary reasons."

Harry grinned. "Oh."

Dumbledore sighed and took a seat in a chair next to James. "Alright, Harry, why don't you tell me what happened?"

Harry nodded and looked over at his Da before he began. Then he started from the beginning. He told them about his suspicions and then how when McGonagall didn't believe them that they decided to go down there themselves. He explained about how they learned from Hagrid that music puts Fluffy to sleep, and how they got past the Devil's snare, by Hermione remembering to use sunlight. He went on to explain the flying keys, the chessboard with Ron conducting them, the troll who was already passed out thanks to who they thought had been Snape. He talked about the potions room which was due to Hermione's brilliance, and how finally Harry confronted Quirrell. He explained how Voldemort was living in the back of Quirrell's head, and how Snape had really been trying to save him all year, not kill him.

"Why the hell would Snape try to save my son?" James asked in bewilderment.

Dumbledore smiled. "Probably because he owes you a life debt. So, Quirrell melted or turned to dust when you touched him?"

Harry nodded. "How come when I touched him he... disappeared like that?"

Dumbledore smiled. "I can answer that, Harry. It was because of love. Love is the most pure emotion in the world, and your mother threw herself in front of you, sacrificing her life for yours. That is love at its most pure state. Even if Lily did not die at that moment, it was the intent of her action. Love is a powerful emotion, Harry. This love lives inside your very skin. That love was so good and so pure that Quirrell couldn't bear for you to touch him, because he shared his soul with evil."

Harry nodded. "Oh."

James wrapped an arm around Harry and ruffled his hair. "I've been so worried about you! Are you sure that you're alright?"

"I'm fine, Da." Harry looked over at Dumbledore, squirming a bit as James kissed his forehead. "Sir, I was wondering about something. The mirror... how did I get the stone from it?"

Dumbledore smiled, his eyes twinkling in what looked like mischief. "Aw, one of my more brilliant ideas, if I do say so myself. The only person who would be able to get the stone was someone who wanted to get the stone, but didn't want to use it. Like I said, one of my more brilliant ideas, and between you and me, that is saying something."

James grinned. "Alright, well I'm going to head home then. I need to shower and I need to shave. I've to go and see your m-Moony... well I've got somewhere to go. You got the feast tonight and then I'll see you tomorrow at the train station." He kissed Harry's forehead, ignoring his son's squirm of discomfort. "I love you."

Harry nodded. "I love you too, Da. Bye."

He watched his father leave with Dumbledore, and soon Madam Pomfrey was fussing over him. Ron and Hermione came in and he heard their story about how they did try to owl Dumbledore but that he had already known, and had known that he had went after him. He also learned that Gryffindor had lost the Quidditch Cup since Harry had been unconscious in the hospital wing.

Hagrid came to visit Harry, sobbing. He thought that the entire thing was his fault, and was quite shocked when Harry yelled at him and told him that it was Voldemort. Hagrid had then given Harry a photo album that he made of his parents' wedding and pictures of their time at Hogwarts. Harry was pleased to have more pictures of his mum. He thanked him and then anxiously awaited the time for when he could leave the hospital.

Later on that evening at the feast, Ron, Hermione, Neville, and Harry were all awarded house points for their bravery—Neville who had stood up to his friends because he didn't want Gryffindor to get into trouble, was awarded for this as a mark of true bravery. They received 170 points total, securing them the House Cup. It was one of the best evenings of Harry's life.

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## Chapter 7: Summer Vacation

**Author's Notes:** please review! newly edited

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### Chapter VII – Summer Vacation

When Harry stepped into Potter Manor the next evening with James he was glad to be there. His first year at school had turned out to be slightly more eventful than he had planned on. But he was glad that it was summer time. Once he had deposited all of his belongings into his bedroom, he headed downstairs and into the living room where James was.

“Hey, Da.”

James looked up and smiled warmly at his son. “Hi, how are you feeling?”

Harry shrugged as he plopped himself down in his favourite cozy armchair in front of the fire, grinning when Foolish rested his head on his knee. “Alright. I wasn’t really hurt or anything.”

James nodded. “You know, when I read your letters and I heard about all those suspicions you had, I never imagined that you would end up face to face with Voldemort again, and so soon in your life.”

“But you knew that I would end up seeing him again?”

“Yeah, I did.” James replied, his voice sad, almost desperate.

“Voldemort is the most evil wizard since Grindelwald, and frankly, I believe that he is worse. My Da used to tell me stories about Grindelwald and about the evil things that he had done. Then my mum would tell me about how Dumbledore had destroyed him. But then Voldemort started rising and gathering followers. My parents were worried. They tried not to be of course, as they didn’t want to

scare me. But I knew that they were afraid. Voldemort was a lot worse than Grindelwald ever was.”

Harry stared at his father in surprise. James had never really talked about the time when Voldemort was around. Harry remembered the way he had sat on his father’s lap on the park bench in Little Whinging after being rescued from the Dursleys, and how his Da had told him the story about him. He remembered the surprise and sadness that he had felt when he learned that he had made Voldemort disappear, and that his mum was gone. But even now, at eleven years old, Harry still didn’t understand everything.

“Da, what was it like when Voldemort was around?”

James sighed. “It’s hard to explain Harry. You wouldn’t remember the fear or anything. But it was terrible. Do you remember how I told you that people were afraid to speak his name?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah. I noticed that other than Professor Dumbledore no one calls him Voldemort at Hogwarts either. Snape calls him the Dark Lord, and Ron as well as everyone else calls him You-Know-Who. And every time I did say his name out loud everyone would sort of shudder and tell me not to use his name.”

“Exactly. Voldemort has been gone for ten years, but people are still afraid of him. Dumbledore always said that *“fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself”*. He was very right by that. I don’t know about you but when I say Voldemort or I hear his name, I understand that I am dealing with a dark and dangerous wizard. But, when I hear You-Know-Who, or He Who Must Not Be Named, I feel more fearful, because to me by not saying his name its worse.” James explained. “Does that make sense to you?”

“Yeah, I feel the same way. Whenever I heard someone say You-Know-Who, I couldn’t help but get this big ball of fear in my stomach, you know? But I’m so used to hearing Voldemort that it’s not the same.”

James smiled at his son, glad that he understood. “Yeah, that’s it exactly. It was dark times, Harry, very dark times. No one knew who

to trust or who to turn to. No one knew who was a Death Eater and who was under the Imperius Curse.”

“What’s the Imperius Curse?” Harry asked.

“That’s one of the Unforgivables. There are three and this one enables another wizard or witch to control you. To make you do something that you don’t want to do. Lots of witches and wizards claimed to have been under the Imperius Curse when Voldemort had his downfall. But the problem with it is that you can’t prove that it was true. It caused a lot of problems. I think there is a spell out now or something Dumbledore can do anyway with a light thing to see if you were under the curse or not. I’m not sure and until it becomes a spell, Aurors don’t know it.” James explained. “You’ll probably learn about the Unforgivables in your sixth or seventh year. Anyway, because no one was sure who they could trust, the entire wizarding community was afraid. There was another problem too, because muggles were dying as well. Voldemort and his followers were not only torturing and murdering witches and wizards, but entire muggle families as well. There were massacres of muggle schools and communities. The muggles couldn’t explain what was going on, and it was a nightmare for the Ministry of Magic who had to go and do memory charms on muggles who had seen more than they should have. The entire world lived in constant fear and chaos.”

“He’s back now isn’t he? I mean, I saw him. His face was coming out of the back of Quirrell’s head. He thought that he had killed both you and Mum. He told me that he could bring you and Mum back to life if I gave him the stone. But I knew that he was lying.” Harry replied; his voice soft and his eyes slightly unfocused, as he remembered what had happened only a week before.

James nodded and he got up to take a seat next to his son, draping his arm around his shoulders and pulling him close. “He was lying, yes; no one can be brought back from the dead, Harry. If you had given him that stone he only would have killed you. He had his downfall. He disappeared thinking that Lily and I were dead, so it’s only natural that he would assume so now. But no, he’s not back.”

“Hagrid told me that he always believed that Voldemort would come



back one day. That he didn't die that night, like everyone said he did."

"No, he didn't. You stumped him, Harry. Dumbledore told you that day in the hospital." James replied as he tried to help him understand. "Lily threw herself in front of you to save your life. She would have died that night, as would I if I hadn't placed powerful protection charms on all of us. And I suppose if we hadn't dived out of the way. Love, Harry, Dumbledore believes that love protected you. Our love, Lily's love. That's very old and very ancient magic, good magic, something that Voldemort would have overlooked. That love caused the Killing Curse to backfire. But it didn't kill him. He lost his body, but his essence is still floating around. The spell only backfired and because it wasn't a direct hit, I would assume that's why his essence is still there. So no, he is not back because he has to depend on others for survival. He was joined with Quirrell, living in the back of his head, a parasite, feeding off the strength of another's body. Then when you grabbed Quirrell and he started to blister and melt away like that, it was because again, of love. It lives in your skin like Dumbledore said. It again forced Voldemort back because again he overlooked it, and being so weak was unable to do anything to prevent it. He's not back, but this was the first time that he has shown himself in ten years. He will return; whether it be tomorrow or ten years from now. He will be back and the world will live in fear once more."

Harry glanced at his father carefully. He knew that James had difficulty talking about Voldemort because it always made him remember what happened to Lily. And he respected his father more for dredging up the terrible past to help him understand. But he still had questions. "Will someone ever destroy Voldemort once and for all?"

James looked at Harry then, his eyes as dark as smoke. He remembered the words of the prophecy that Dumbledore had told him. But how could he tell an eleven-year-old-boy that the wizarding world would one day rest on his shoulders? He pushed the thoughts aside, no; Harry would know when he was ready, but no sooner. "Maybe, someday. Everyone will always hope. Come on, let's go eat some dinner and you can tell me about the leaving feast and about how Gryffindor scored the House Cup."

Harry grinned as he stood up to follow his father into the kitchen.  
“Alright.”

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On the day of Harry’s twelfth birthday, he woke up feeling incredibly depressed. He had been out of school for one month now and even though he had sent countless letters to his friends, he had yet to receive one reply. He knew that James and Remus were worried about him as well, as his mood had been getting progressively sourer by the minute.

He had spent his days playing Quidditch or flying around as much as he could. Remus played with him a lot during his free time, but he was always busy doing research. Harry had known forever that his uncle was a werewolf, and he knew that Remus was still hoping to find a cure. James was quite good at potions, and once a month he would brew the Wolfsbane Potion for him. It would simply make him a tame wolf during the full moon. But Harry knew that sometimes James would transform into his animagus form of a white stag and would run wild with Remus during the full moon in the large back yard and Quidditch field.

While Remus was busy researching a cure for lycanthropy, James was at work. He worked as an Auror at the Ministry of Magic. So he was gone most of the day and sometimes late into the night. Harry was used to it, but he felt incredibly lonely suddenly because he wasn’t hearing from his friends. He spent a lot of hours playing with Foolish, who could always cheer him up, on the best of occasions. So when he stepped into the kitchen around ten that morning, he wasn’t in the best of moods.

Maddy smiled up at him when he came into the room. “Good morning, Harry, happy birthday!”

Harry managed a small smile for the house elf. “Thanks Maddy. Did Da already go to work?”

Maddy nodded. “He did. He waited until nine thirty to see if you would

wake up as he is anxious to give you his present, but he had to head out. What is you liking for breakfast this morning? Mickey is making eggs and everything for Remus, would you like the same or something different?"

"Surprise me."

Maddy grinned. "Of course, Harry."

"You know boy, you've been a dead bore for the last few weeks. You've had James worried sick about you!" Andrew Potter's portrait replied from the dining room wall.

Harry shrugged as he looked up at his grandfather. Andrew Potter had the same messy black hair as both Harry and James, but he had hazel eyes. Harry always thought it was almost eerie how similar James and Andrew Potter looked. "Hi, Grandda. I just miss my friends is all. I wish they would write back."

Andrew shrugged. "Well if they don't answer then go visit them. James or Remus will take you. Won't they, Gwen dear?"

Gwendolynn Potter was the most beautiful woman that Harry had ever seen. Her hair was a dark rich red that sometimes looked brown, and she had dark gold eyes that seemed to look into your soul. Harry always thought that she would be a very good mother. "First of all, happy birthday, dear. It's not everyday our young man turns twelve. And I'm afraid that your grandfather does have a point, moping around here is not going to improve your situation."

Harry grinned up at the portraits. "I suppose so. I'll talk to Da about it later, if I don't hear from anyone in the next few days."

This seemed to satisfy his grandparents so he grinned at Maddy when she came in followed by Remus with breakfast. He ate happily, feeling much more cheered as he talked to Remus. They agreed to go out and play Quidditch for a few hours so Harry hurried upstairs to get his broom. They flew around for a while, mostly just playing catch with the quaffle. Around lunchtime, Remus decided to head in and get back to work, but Harry stayed outside to fly.

With the wind whipping through his hair he felt so free and happy. He loved to fly more than anything else in the world. He heard a sound as he landed on the ground and turned in the direction of a small, dirty house elf wearing what looked like a pillowcase. He was so badly dressed that Harry thought that he must be hurt. Harry was used to Maddy and Mickey who wore their tidy little uniforms, Maddy in the old fashioned black maid's dress and Mickey in black pants, a white shirt and a vest.

"Who are you?" He asked as he dropped his broom on the ground.

"Harry Potter, sir, I is so honoured to meet you, sir." The elf replied in a high squeaky voice that was much higher pitched than Mickey's, but not nearly as high as Maddy's voice.

"Uh, nice to meet you too."

The elf bowed so low that his nose touched the ground. "Harry Potter, sir, I is Dobby the house elf, and I have to warn you, sir."

"Warn me?" Harry asked in alarm. "Dobby, why don't you take a seat and..."

He trailed off when the elf began to sob uncontrollably. "Sit down! Sit down! Oh, Harry Potter, sir, Dobby has heard about your bravery and your greatness, but not about your kindness, sir! Dobby has never been asked to sit down like an equal, sir!"

Harry stared at the elf in shock. Maddy and Mickey had always been treated like an equal. They ate dinner with them most of the time and played games with Harry or were there to help when they needed them. But this elf seemed shocked beyond reason to be asked to sit down. "Well, uh, Dobby, you obviously haven't met very many decent wizards then."

"No, I haven't." Dobby said, then he slapped his hand over his mouth in shock and grabbed Harry's broomstick. "Bad Dobby!" He shrieked as he smacked himself over the head with it. "Bad Dobby!"

“Hey! That’s my broom, what are you doing?” Harry exclaimed as he grabbed the broom back.

Dobby stared up at Harry in surprise. “I was punishing myself, Harry Potter, sir. I almost spoke badly of my family, sir.”

Harry shook his head; this elf was obviously completely whacked. “Alright, so, what are you here to warn me about?”

Dobby gulped. “Harry Potter must not go back to Hogwarts.”

“What?” Harry asked. “That’s ridiculous, why not?!?”

“Dark and dangerous things will be happening there and you must not go back.”

“That’s dumb. I’m going back, I have friends there, and I’m not going to let anything happen to them.” Harry explained.

Dobby looked up at Harry carefully. “Friends that don’t even write to, Harry Potter?”

“I suspect that they’ve just been busy and... wait a minute. How do you know that my friends haven’t been writing to me?”

Dobby’s ears twitched as he reached around under the pillowcase and pulled out a stack of letters. Harry could recognize the writing of Hagrid, Ron, Neville, and Hermione.

“Have you been stopping my letters? Give those to me!” Harry demanded angrily.

“I thought that if Harry Potter, sir, thought that he didn’t have any friends, then he wouldn’t want to go back to school, sir.” Dobby explained.

Harry glared at Dobby. “Give me those letters, now!”

“Promise Dobby that you will not go back to school, sir.”

“No!” Harry exclaimed. “Give me those!”

Dobby ran for it as Harry chased after him around the yard. He shrieked when a quaffle that Harry threw at him hit him in the back and he fell over, just as Mickey came rushing outside.

“Harry, what is you doing?”

“Mickey, this elf has been keeping all of the letters from my friends.” Harry replied and growled in frustration when he disappeared.

Mickey looked up at Harry. “Who is he?”

Harry shrugged. “He said his name is Dobby, and that I can’t go back to school in September because something bad is going to happen!”

Mickey shook his head. “That is not making sense. The only Dobby I is knowing works for the Malfoys. Don’t you know their son?”

Harry’s eyes darkened. “Yeah, and I just bet he put him up to this! He just doesn’t want me to go back! The prat!” Harry stormed into the house and into the living room. He needed to talk to James when he came home.

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James stared at Harry as he explained what had happened that day. He shook his head in surprise. “Well, I think that you’re right. Malfoy probably just doesn’t want you at school, and I wouldn’t worry about it. But at least now you know why you haven’t heard from your friends.”

Harry nodded. “I guess so. Can I go visit Ron tomorrow?”

James nodded. “Sure, I’ll get the Weasleys address from work and I’ll take you over in the morning. But for now, don’t you want your birthday present?”

Harry grinned. He still felt surprised at being given gifts. He remembered the way that the Dursleys would shower Dudley in presents, and then ignore Harry altogether when it was supposed to

be his turn. He didn't tell his Da about that, but he figured James probably knew anyway. "Of course, what is it?"

James laughed and reached behind the couch for a box that he tossed in Harry's direction. "Happy Birthday, Sport! Open it up."

Harry grinned as he began to rip open the wrapping paper. Inside were two new novels by his favourite author, a bag of new tricks from Zonko's Joke Shop, and a Quidditch jersey from Pride of Portree. "Thanks Da! But Pride of Portree?"

James grinned. "They're a good team! I know you like them as well!"

Harry laughed. They were his favourite team, but he liked to tease his Da about them. He and James would always get tickets to the local games. "I know, I love it, thanks!"

He hurried over to hug his father, pleased when his father kissed his forehead even if he squirmed in discomfort. "No problem. Now let's see some of those Zonko's products."

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The next morning, Harry was dressed and ready to go bright and early. He couldn't wait to see Ron. He hurried downstairs and grinned at James when he saw him sitting at the table reading the paper.

"Can we go now?"

James laughed as he sat the paper down. "All ready to go, are you? Don't you want any breakfast?"

Harry shook his head. "Nope."

James grinned as he drank the last few gulps of his coffee and stood up. "Alright, come on. We're going to drive there."

Harry laughed. He thought that it was amusing how fascinated his father was with muggle things. James had bought three cars: a red mustang convertible, a blue corvette stingray, and a black Ferrari.

Remus thought it was amusing as well, though, he enjoyed driving the sport cars just as much as James did. James made sure that their home held both magical and muggle things. They even had a computer and a telephone.

Harry hurried after his father and climbed into the front seat of the mustang next to his Da, and then he reached for the radio dial. He smiled as AC/DC came blaring out of the stereo singing about being back in black. They drove in silence through Scotland and into England to a small town called Ottery St. Catchpole. Since James had added some magical features onto the car, they arrived in a little over an hour. When they pulled into the driveway of the house, Harry could only grin. He thought it was the greatest house that he had ever seen.

It was four stories high and had rooms built in what looked like a crazy fashion. The house looked like it might be hanging together by magic, which Harry knew could be entirely possible. There was a sign out front that said: **The Burrow**. There was also a large barn in the back with chickens, a large shed, as well as a broomshed. Harry could picture Ron, Fred, and George living here instantly. It was a great house.

"This house is brilliant." Harry replied with a grin.

James laughed as he parked the car and stepped outside with his son. "It's definitely very brilliant. But, then again, I have met Arthur Weasley and he is very eccentric. This house fits him to a tee."

Harry walked over to the door and knocked as James glanced around at the gardens with curiosity. The door opened and the pretty plump woman with bright red hair and kind blue eyes that he recognized from the train station grinned.

"Harry, dear, how wonderful to see you, please come in." Mrs. Weasley replied before her eyes shifted to James. "L-Lord Potter, what a surprise. Have you two eaten breakfast?"

James shook his head. "No, Harry was too excited to get over here today. I hope you don't mind us dropping in like this."



Mrs. Weasley smiled warmly. "Not in the least. Come on in and sit down, I'll fix you a spot of breakfast." They took a seat in the crowded kitchen at the table as Mrs. Weasley began to set to work. "I was just saying to Arthur last night that if Harry didn't write back by the end of the week we were going to see if something had happened."

James laughed. "We felt the same way. It turns out there was this house elf who had hidden all of Harry's letters. Said he didn't want him to go back to school. We just found out yesterday. I guess that means that your son hasn't received any of the letters that Harry's written either."

Mrs. Weasley shook her head. "No, not one. Odd that a house elf would do that."

Harry shrugged. "Well I don't know, I think it was a trick. He was an odd elf. Is everyone still sleeping?"

Mrs. Weasley smiled as she placed plates of bacon, eggs, home fries, toast, ham, and sausages in front of them. "No, they should be down in a bit. Are you just here for the day then dear or would you like to stay for the rest of the summer?"

Harry grinned. "Wow, you want me to stay for the whole summer? Can I Da?"

James shrugged. "If you want to, and Mrs. Weasley doesn't mind."

Mrs. Weasley grinned. "Of course I don't mind. Ron would love it, and really what's one more. It's up to Lord Potter, though; I don't want you to think that I'm abducting your son. And you can call me Molly, Lord Potter."

"Call me James, please. I hate being addressed as my title. I think Harry would enjoy it. Thanks, Molly. Well, Harry, I guess I'll pack your stuff up, and bring the trunk over later then. Is that alright with you?"

Harry grinned. "Yeah, thanks." He looked up with a grin on his face at the sound on the stairs. "Hey, Ron."

Ron's eyes widened in surprise. "Harry, what are you doing here?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm coming to stay the rest of the summer."

Ron grinned. "Wicked." He sat down next to him at the table and began to fill up his plate. "So, how come you never wrote back?"

"I'll tell you later. It's a weird story."

Ron nodded and grinned at Fred and George as they came down the stairs. "Hey, Harry's here."

George grinned. "Wotcher, Harry."

They began to fill their plates too. Percy came down next, his hair still rumpled from sleep. Then Harry saw the small pretty redhead that he remembered from the train station.

"Mummy, have you seen my jumper?"

Mrs. Weasley smiled up at her only daughter. "Check the basket in my room, dear."

The girl nodded and then let out a small shriek when she noticed Harry, her face turning bright red and, her chocolate brown eyes widening in surprise and then she ran upstairs.

"Who is that?" Harry asked.

Ron smirked. "Ginny. She's been talking about you all summer, quite annoying really."

James grinned at Harry and wiggled his eyebrows. "She likes you."

Harry blushed and stuck his tongue out at his father, just as Mr. Weasley stepped into the kitchen, still adjusting his robes.

"Morning everyone." He looked up in surprise to see Harry and James there. "Hello James. And you must be Harry, what a surprise!"

James grinned. "Harry wanted to see Ron, and Molly has invited him to stay for the rest of the summer."

Harry nodded. "Nice to meet you, sir."

Mr. Weasley grinned. "Same to you. Harry, do you know anything about muggles?"

Harry nodded. "A bit, why?"

Mr. Weasley helped himself to some breakfast as he spoke. "Excellent. Can you tell me this, what, exactly, is the function of a rubber duck?"

Harry snorted in laughter, and then he realized that Mr. Weasley was dead serious. "Oh well-"

He was interrupted by the owls that flew in through the window. Mrs. Weasley was pulling them apart and she smiled. "Hogwarts letters, dears. Oh look, they even sent us Harry's, Dumbledore doesn't miss a trick that man. I guess we'll have to head out to Diagon Alley later."

Harry opened his letter. It was the same as last year, except for a sheet of new books he needed:

***A Standard Book of Spells Grade Two* by Miranda Goshawk**

***Break with a Banshee* by Gilderoy Lockhart**

***Gadding with Ghouls* by Gilderoy Lockhart**

***Holiday with Hags* by Gilderoy Lockhart**

***Travels with Trolls* by Gilderoy Lockhart**

***Voyages with Vampires* by Gilderoy Lockhart**

***Wandering with Werewolves* by Gilderoy Lockhart**

***Year with the Yeti* by Gilderoy Lockhart**

"Who's Gilderoy Lockhart?" Harry asked. "He wrote almost all of the books."

Fred and George grinned identical smirks. "This blonde bloke that Mum fancies. I bet the new DADA teacher's a witch."

James stood up and nodded. "Well, Molly, thanks for the delicious breakfast. I'll drop Harry's trunk off later today. Arthur, would you like a ride to the Ministry?"

Mr. Weasley grinned. "In a muggle car?"

James nodded, grinning. "Yeah. A mustang convertible."

Mr. Weasley clapped his hands in excitement. They said goodbye to everyone and were gone.

Mrs. Weasley smiled. "Ron, Fred, George, I need you to de-gnome the garden for me."

"Aw, Mum, but Harry's here." Ron complained.

"That's nice dear. Now let's see what Lockhart has to say on the subject."

Fred groaned. "Mum, we know how to de-gnome the garden. Harry, have you ever done it before?"

Harry shook his head. "No, we don't have any gnomes."

George grinned. "Well come on then, we'll show you how it's done."

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The Burrow was definitely an interesting place in Harry's opinion. After spending a few days there he decided that other than Hogwarts and home, it was his favourite place in the world. Not only did they treat him great (though Mrs. Weasley was constantly adding third and fourth helpings to his plate) and they let him stay the rest of the summer, but they also had a ghou in the attic. They also invited his Da and Uncle Remus over to dinner every once in a while. Harry was enjoying himself immensely.

Now, they were going to Diagon Alley. Harry was surprised to hear that Ginny would be starting at Hogwarts this year. He realized that

she did look eleven when he thought about it; it was only that she was really tiny. He found it amusing how shy she was around him. She was constantly knocking things over or bumping into things when he came into the room, or she would stutter and fall over. He tried to ignore it as much as possible, as he thought it might make her feel less embarrassed. She hardly said two words to him the entire time he was there. Not to mention the fact that James was teasing him about it... Harry being her first crush and all. He was embarrassed by that as well.

They used Floo powder to go to Diagon Alley, which was Harry's least favourite way of traveling. He was alright, though, and was quite proud of himself for landing in the right spot. They met Hermione at *Gringotts*, and after picking up everything they needed headed to *Flourish and Blotts*. They were surprised to see a huge line up almost around the building. They pushed their way into the store and noticed that there was a man signing autographs.

Hermione squealed in delight. "We actually get to meet Gilderoy Lockhart!" When Ron turned and gave her a disgusted look, she shrugged. "Well, I mean, he wrote practically the entire booklist."

The photographer stepped on Ron's toes and he gave the man a dirty look as the man told him to get out of the way. Harry was about to tell Ron not to worry about it, when he heard a smooth masculine voice shout out to the entire store: "It can't be Harry Potter!"

Whispers began to circulate between the people around him, when, he was suddenly yanked forward and into the arms of Gilderoy Lockhart. The man was tall, golden blonde and he had very, very white teeth. He draped his arm casually around Harry's shoulder and grinned. "Smile, Harry. Together you and I make the front page."

Harry tried to pull away as the photographer snapped a picture. His face felt hot and flushed. *What right did the man have to pull him up front like this? What if he didn't want to be on the damn front page?* He turned his attention back to Lockhart who was now placing piles of books in his hands.

"Ladies, and gentleman, now seems like the perfect time to make a

little announcement. When young Harry here stepped into *Flourish and Blotts*, he only wanted to purchase my autobiography, *Magical Me*. But I am not only going to give him my biography and my entire collection of works for free, but he will also be getting the real magical me! That's right; I have accepted the post of the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher at Hogwarts."

There was applause throughout the store as Harry managed to slip away, his face still flushed with embarrassment. He dropped the books into Ginny's basket. "Here, you can have these, I'll buy my own."

Ginny blushed, as Mrs. Weasley thanked Harry for the books. Then he stopped when he heard a familiar drawl.

"Bet you loved that, didn't you, Potter? The famous Potter, can't even go into a bookstore without making the front page."

"He didn't want all that!" Ginny exclaimed, and Harry glanced at her in surprise. It was the first time that she had spoken in front of him.

Malfoy smirked. "Got yourself a girlfriend, Potter?"

Ginny turned scarlet, just as Fred and George appeared. "Let's get out of here, it's a madhouse."

A man with long blonde hair, the same colour as Draco's appeared next to them. "Draco, aren't you going to introduce me to your friends?" His cold eyes turned to the group. "Harry Potter, what an honour it is to meet you? And this must be Miss Granger," when Malfoy nodded he turned to the Weasleys. "And you must be the Weasleys." He reached into Ginny's cauldron and picked up a battered Transfiguration book, just as Mr. Weasley approached them. "Tut, tut, Arthur, it seems the Ministry is not paying you enough these days, what, with all the overtime and yet you still can't afford something decent to give to your daughter."

Mr. Weasley's eyes flashed. "Some of us have a different view on what is decent, Lucius."

Harry wasn't quite sure what happened next, but the next thing he knew Mr. Weasley and Mr. Malfoy were fighting, knocking bookshelves over as Mrs. Weasley shouted for them to stop. Hagrid appeared and dragged them apart before pulling everyone outside. James appeared and ranted a bit over what an arse Lockhart was and that he didn't have the right to pull Harry into the spotlight like that. He also made sure to tell Mr. Weasley that he had a good punch but only after Mrs. Weasley had left the room. After listening to Mrs. Weasley lecture her husband on proper behaviour in front of the children, they headed back to the Leaky Cauldron, and from there, back to the Burrow.

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Finally, it was time to head back to school. With so many people having to get packed, Harry began to wonder how they would fit in the old Ford Anglia that Mr. Weasley owned. After all there were six kids, six trunks, two adults, not to mention all of the pets and cages. However, Harry's worries were answered when Mr. Weasley explained to him that he had "helped" the car out a bit. Harry could only grin. The man was brilliant.

By the time that they all arrived at the train station, they were running behind. Everyone hurried through the barrier on Platform Nine and  $\frac{3}{4}$  leaving only Ron and Harry left. Ron glanced up at the clock then and turned to Harry.

"Well, we've only got a minute, shall we run for it?"

Harry nodded and they pushed their carts in front of them, running full speed at the barrier but instead of sliding through, they crashed headlong into it. Muggles began to look at them curiously as they got up. Harry moved closer to Ron.

"Now what do we do?"

Ron looked worried for a minute. "If we can't get through, then what if Mum and Dad can't get back to us?"

Harry glanced up at the clock as it struck eleven. "The train's left,

we've missed it! Why don't we just go wait over by the car?"

Ron's eyes lit up. "Harry, the car!"

"What?"

Ron gestured for Harry to follow him. They placed all of their belongings back into the car, and sat inside with Ron in the driver's seat. "Dad put a flying charm on it and an invisibility charm."

Harry's eyes lit up with understanding. "Can you drive it?"

Ron nodded and the next thing he knew they were flying high in the air, invisible to the muggles below.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dear Harry,**

**WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING? YOU BETTER HAVE ONE DAMN GOOD REASON FOR GETTING INTO A FLYING CAR AND FLYING TO HOGWARTS!! WHY THE HELL WEREN'T YOU ON THE SCHOOL TRAIN LIKE YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE?**

**Okay, now that I've gotten my fatherly duties out of the way, and have properly pissed you off; let me tell you that as a Marauder, flying a car to Hogwarts... bloody brilliant! You are definitely becoming a true Marauder. Of course your mum would tell you that that was very irresponsible, and that you should behave yourself. But I say, if you're not going to have a spot of fun, then what's the point?**

**I just received an owl from McGonagall informing me that you and Ron have detention for doing so. I also hear that you crashed into the Whomping Willow. Rotten luck, that tree is dangerous. It was actually planted there the year I started school. It was planted for Moony actually so he had someplace to go for his time of the month. It leads to the Shrieking Shack. But I wouldn't recommend going anywhere near that tree anytime soon. At least not until you find the map.**



I read the letter from McGonagall out loud to Moony and he almost cracked a rib. I'm glad that someone finds it amusing. Well, write back and tell me what the hell happened? Why weren't you on the train? Hope you have a good term.

Love,  
Da

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## Chapter 8: Second Year

**Author's Notes:** please review! again a mix of the book and the movie! newly edited

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## Chapter VIII – Second Year

*Dear Da,*

*Ron and I flew the car to Hogwarts because the barrier wouldn't let us through. We were stuck on the other side. Then the clock struck eleven and we realized that the train had left. We don't understand what happened as George, Fred, Ginny, Percy, and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley made it through the barrier just fine. Anyway, we crashed into the Whomping Willow and, yeah, it hurt. That tree is definitely dangerous.*

*Mrs. Weasley sent Ron a Howler because of the car. She's a scary woman when she's on a rampage. Hermione had been giving Ron and I the cold shoulder since we returned to school because she said that we were irresponsible. But ever since the Howler came she seems to think that we got what we deserved. Mrs. Weasley said that Mr. Weasley is facing an inquiry at work. I feel really guilty now because of the car, I hope that everything turns out okay.*

*The new DADA teacher is really weird. He cornered me earlier before*

*Herbology and went into this big long speech about me flying a car to Hogwarts being all his fault. He says that he gave me a taste of fame that day in the bookstore and now I was thinking I needed a bit more. He said that just because he had won Witch Weekly's Most Charming Smile Award five times and was so incredibly handsome and famous, didn't mean that I had to go out and try to prove myself. He says that one day I will be just as famous as him. What a prat, eh? He didn't even let me get a word in!*

*I also met this new kid from Hufflepuff, Justin Finch-Fletchley. He seems like a nice guy, though he tends to ramble a lot. I think I got his entire life story in five minutes. We were re-potting mandrakes in Herbology today. Not too much fun, they sound terrible!*

*There's this first year too in Gryffindor named Colin Creevey. He idolizes me, or something. He always has a camera and wants to take my picture and then he wanted me sign it. I said no, I mean how embarrassing is that? And if that wasn't bad enough, Lockhart shows up and starts lecturing me about fame again! His DADA class is such a joke! We had a test the first day to see how well we read his textbooks—the entire test was about him!! The questions were like: What is Gilderoy Lockhart's favourite colour? When is Gilderoy Lockhart's birthday? What is Gilderoy Lockhart's greatest ambition? What a crock! Then he releases a cage of Cornish pixies and tries to round them up, but his spell didn't even work and they took his wand and threw it out the window! It was a disaster! He made Ron, Hermione, and I clean them up. And poor Neville ended up hanging from the candelabra.*

*Also, Ron broke his wand in half because of the car crash, but he's too afraid to write home for another one. He says his mum will just tell him that it's his own fault. He spellotaped it together but man, it sparks everywhere. He is having a bit of trouble with his spell work.*

*Wood started Quidditch practice early this year, as he is determined to win. He said we would have won last year, except for the fact that I was unconscious in the hospital wing (guilt swarming in here even though I know it's not my fault that I was unconscious ... well sort of). He lectured us on strategy and game ideas for so long and it was so early. I don't think Katie, Alicia, Angelina, Fred, or George really*

*heard a word he said. I could barely keep my eyes open. Then Wood got angry when Fred asked why he couldn't have told us this when we were awake. So we finally go out to practice and the Slytherins were there. Snape wrote them a note to have the pitch even though Gryffindor booked it. They got a new seeker – Draco Malfoy! And he bought the entire team new brooms – well his father did – Nimbus Two Thousand and Ones!*

*So we're all just sort of standing there glaring at them when Ron and Hermione show up to see if practice was over. It hadn't even started yet, because Wood lectured so long. Hermione made some comment about Gryffindor having talent and how no one on the Gryffindor Quidditch team had to buy their way in. Then Malfoy called her a 'filthy little mudblood'. I didn't know what it meant, but Ron went nuts, as did everyone else on the team. Ron tried to make Malfoy eat slugs but his wand backfired. We had to bring him to Hagrid's hut. Hagrid said mudblood is a really foul name for someone who is muggleborn.*

*I had my detention tonight and it was the worst ever! Lockhart requested me to help him answer his fan mail! But I heard a voice in the walls saying something about ripping and killing and smelling blood. But Lockhart swears that he didn't hear anything! I told Ron and Ron thinks that it's weird that Lockhart didn't hear it either, so unless he's just lying. Oh well, it has been eventful.*

*Talk to you later!*

*Love,  
Harry*

**Dear Harry,**

**I have no idea why the barrier would have closed like that. There must be a specific reason. I'll look into it and maybe talk to Dumbledore about it. Don't worry about Arthur, he's fine and the Ministry just gave him a small fine. Since you were involved as well, I told Arthur that I was paying for half the fine. He argued but I eventually wore him down.**

**Tell Ron to write home for another wand, as he obviously can't**

work with that one all year. No matter how mad his mother is she's not going to want him to fail. Though it was probably a good thing that his wand backfired, as I can't see Lucius Malfoy being too pleased if his son was forced to eat slugs?

I don't know about Lockhart, but he does sound a bit conceited, doesn't he? He attracts a lot of women though, something about blonde blokes and their dashing good looks. I'm being sarcastic here. He actually went to school with us and I know he asked Lily out once but she turned him down. This made me happy ... I hate that guy!

The summer was definitely strange, not having you around. Both Moony and I were a bit restless. But I know you loved staying at the Weasleys' house. I decided that I'm giving up on the decisions concerning the East Wing and have simply given Maddy and Mickey free reign on fixing it up. The manor will be yours one day so I guess it doesn't matter what it looks like because you can just change it. Or your wife will; it doesn't matter. Ooh, scary thought you married — okay, off track.

The Auror department has been going through some pretty big changes. King has been made the department head. It's a really big move for someone so young. You remember King, don't you? Kingsley Shacklebolt. From what I understand he actually went to Hogwarts with Bill Weasley. That only proves my point about how much of an accomplishment it is for him to make department head. They did ask me if I wanted the position but I turned them down. I don't want to be responsible for an entire department ... I'd rather just be an Auror. Anyway, since I turned that down Moody randomly showed up and convinced me to take the position of Head Auror. So now I'm in charge of the detective's unit or the on-field unit, whatever you want to call it. It also means more paperwork for me, not fun. You know I never understood why they make you do paperwork. I thought the torture of homework was supposed to be left behind after one leaves school. Oh well, it's something I have to do.

Moony hasn't really been up to too much other than researching. He's going out to Afghanistan to talk to a wizard there who

might have some information that can help him out. Apparently he's heard rumours about ancient magic from the Mesopotamians that might play a role in finding a cure. I don't know how long he'll be gone. We'll have to wait and see what he comes up with.

We'll keep me updated on Lockhart and about that voice. Maybe you were just overtired or something.

Love,  
Da

*Dear Da,*

*I was invited to a Deathday Party by Nearly Headless Nick. He was angry because he had been denied entry into the Headless Hunt again. I wanted to make him feel better. So, it was on Halloween. But while I was talking to him, I was all muddy from Quidditch and Filch found me. He had something called Kwikspell on his desk. Apparently he's a squib. No wonder he hates us so much!*

*The Deathday Party was kind of weird. It was filled with ghosts and there was this really eerie music. The food was rotten and terrible. So Ron, Hermione, and I escaped, hoping we could at least get dessert when I heard the voice again. It said: rip, tear, kill, hungry for so long. But neither Ron nor Hermione heard it. I ran towards the sound and ended up in the corridor where the girl's bathroom is. There was water on the floor and Filch's cat, Mrs. Norris, was hanging from the ceiling stiff as a board. Then on the wall in blood it said:*

***The Chamber of Secrets has been opened, enemies of the heir beware.***

*Filch thought that I had killed his cat, and accused me of it. But Dumbledore said that the cat wasn't dead, only petrified and that she can be cured. Apparently the mandrakes can be used for this – pretty good luck that Professor Sprout just happened to decide to work on those this year. I told them about the Deathday Party, since Snape wanted to know why I wasn't at the feast, but I didn't tell anyone about the voice. Do you think that I should? Ron and Hermione don't*

*think so. They think that maybe I'm just going crazy or something.*

Love,  
Harry

*P.S. Congratulations on the promotion, Da! And I hope Uncle Moony finds out some information that will help him.*

**Dear Harry,**

**Keep the voice to yourself for now. I don't think that you're going crazy, but something funny is definitely going on. I don't know anything about the Chamber of Secrets. The only thing that I know is that it is supposed to be a legend. A chamber that Salazar Slytherin built in the castle. Keep me posted on what you find out.**

Love,  
Da

*Dear Da,*

*Professor Binns told us the story. Hogwarts was founded over a thousand years ago by the four greatest witches and wizards of the age. The four Houses are named after them: Godric Gryffindor, Helga Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw and Salazar Slytherin. Slytherin wanted to ban muggleborns from entering the school, and it came to an argument with Gryffindor, which made him leave the school. The story goes that he had built a hidden chamber in the castle before he left the school. Only his heir would be able to unseal the Chamber of Secrets to unleash the horror within, and use it to purge the school of all who he deemed were unworthy to study magic. The horror is believed to be some sort of monster, which the Heir of Slytherin alone can control. The castle has been searched, but no one has ever found the chamber.*

*Spiders in the castle too have been acting really weird; they're constantly fleeing from the scene. We went into the girl's bathroom to talk to Moaning Myrtle – apparently no one goes in there according to Hermione because she is so depressing – but Myrtle says that she*

*didn't see anything. Percy caught us and threatened to take points away if he ever caught us near the girls' bathroom again.*

*Everyone is wondering who the heir is, a lot of people suspect it's Malfoy since he hates non-purebloods and what he calls "blood traitors". Hermione came up with this idea of making Polyjuice Potion and disguising ourselves as Slytherins to make Malfoy talk. I think Ron and I are having a bad influence on her. The problem is, the potion is in a book called Moste Potente Potions and is in the restricted section. But then again, we do have a really thick teacher for DADA, and yup, he signed the paper for us. He never even looked at it; he was too flattered by Hermione wanting him to sign anything. Ron says that the man will sign anything that will stand still long enough. I can only agree.*

*Lockhart told me that he used to be a seeker as well and now he's offering to give me Quidditch pointers (rolls eyes). What is wrong with the bloke? His classes have been boring so far too, unless he's re-enacting some great thing he did from his books and he always picks me to help him act something out.*

*The Quidditch game was terribly rough. There was this rogue bludger that wouldn't leave me alone all game, but I did catch the snitch right from under Malfoy's nose. But the bludger broke my arm. But instead of letting me get it fixed properly, Lockhart tries to fix it. He removed all of the bones from my arm! Madam Pomfrey was not pleased when she realized that I needed to re-grow my bones. It was really painful. And Dobby, that house elf came to visit me in the hospital wing. He blocked the barrier from letting Ron and I through at the train station and he is the one who set the rogue bludger! He had some far-fetched idea that he was saving me from being injured. He said that he only wanted me hurt badly enough to be sent home. He said that the Chamber of Secrets had been opened before.*

*Then he disappeared before I could ask him anything else. Dumbledore and McGonagall came in with Colin Creevey. He was petrified like Mrs. Norris. Dumbledore said that his worst fears were true; the Chamber of Secrets has been opened again.*

*Love,*

*Harry*

Dear Harry,

This sounds like a dangerous business. I don't think that you have to worry as you are not muggleborn but be careful. The Polyjuice Potion is interesting, and I must say, I think you and Ron must have quite an influence on Hermione, if it was her idea.

Let me get this straight though, you're brewing the potion in Moaning Myrtle's bathroom? That is amusing. You know Myrtle had a terrible crush on Sirius when we were in school. She followed him around a lot and always batted her eyes at him. Moony and I used to tease him about it. She's a bit crazy so be careful.

This Dobby thing concerns me, he seems to have your best interests at heart, and he seems to know more then he's saying. Lockhart is another story though and I'm getting the feeling that he is nothing but a brainless git! About your arm though, is it alright then? Dumbledore sent me a note explaining what happened and he said Poppy fixed it in a snap. That git ... I've told Dumbledore time and again what an arse and a fake he is — the bloke is just too bloody cheerful! Try to avoid him, it's probably best.

I'm curious about this Dobby thing now and I'm going to talk to Maddy and Mickey about house elves and restrictions they have upon them. Didn't you say his owners were the Malfoys? Something fishy is going on here. Anyway, I'll keep you updated on what I find out.

Keep me posted.

Love,  
Da

*Dear Da,*

*Hermione and Ron got the Polyjuice Potion started while I was in the*



*hospital. We had to steal some potions ingredients from Snape's private stores. Hermione did the actual stealing I just threw a firework into Goyle's cauldron during Potions. Snape suspects it's me but he can't prove it. It was funny though. Hermione thinks the potion should be ready to use by Christmas. That means I might be staying here again over the holidays as Malfoy is staying. We find that very interesting. He always goes home for the holidays and he makes a big deal about it.*

*There was a duelling club and well ... I can speak Parseltongue. How come no one ever told me that this was abnormal? Ron told me that Salazar Slytherin's famous gift was to talk to snakes, and now that I told a snake not to attack someone at the duelling club the entire school thinks that I'm the heir of Slytherin. The Hufflepuffs are all terrified of me now. And if that's not bad enough on my way back from the library I literally tripped over a petrified Justin Finch-Fletchley and Nearly Headless Nick. Peeves saw me and started yelling attack!*

*Dumbledore believed me when I told him that I didn't do it. Hagrid says that someone has been killing all of his roosters too. He barged in on us to tell Dumbledore that he saw me seconds before I stumbled over the bodies. But Dumbledore believed me, so that makes me feel better. But the whole school is worried now. What kind of monster can attack humans and ghosts?*

*Love,  
Harry*

**Dear Harry,**

**Happy Christmas then. I hope your potion works. I didn't realize that you could speak Parseltongue. I mean, I had seen you talking to snakes before but I don't think it ever really clicked. Parseltongue is also a special gift of Voldemort. I have no idea why you can speak it.**

**Of course Dumbledore believes you. There's no way that you could be attacking fellow students. I don't know about the roosters either, but it might be connected. Good luck with the potion.**

**So whatever is attacking cats and students can also hurt ghosts? This chamber thing is worrying me more and more and Dumbledore doesn't seem to be interested in telling me anything. I want you to be careful. I know that you're a Marauder like I was but I'm serious. We don't need anything like last year to happen again.**

**Love,  
Da**

*Dear Da,*

*The potion worked but Malfoy is definitely not the heir. He doesn't know much more than we do. Hermione accidentally got cat hair though, and she turned into a cat. Good thing Madam Pomfrey doesn't ask too many questions. But she looked funny – she even had a tail!*

*Ron and I could hear Filch yelling after we went to visit Hermione in the hospital wing. I guess Moaning Myrtle flooded the bathroom again. We ran up to see her; I guess someone threw a book at her head. It's a blank diary, except at the bottom it says: Tom Marvolo Riddle. But there was nothing in it. Ron told me not to open it. He says that some books could be dangerous. But it was completely blank. There was something about it though, something that was bugging me. So I decided to keep it with me for a while. I showed Hermione but she couldn't figure it out either.*

*Valentine's Day turned out to be a nightmare though! Lockhart decided that we should celebrate it and he decorated the hall in pink hearts and confetti. He even had these annoying little dwarves dressed with golden wings and harps running around to deliver singing valentines to people.*

*I got cornered.*

*It was so embarrassing. The dwarf shoved me down and sat on my feet as he sang. The poem went something like "His eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad, his hair as dark as a blackboard. I wish*

he was mine, he's really divine, the hero who conquered the Dark Lord."

*Don't laugh. It was embarrassing!*

*I did find out though that Ron was wrong and that it wasn't from Ginny — technically. I guess she lost a bet with Fred and George and they made her write a cheesy poem and give it to the dwarf. Apparently they improvised ... a lot.*

*When the dwarf cornered me like that though, my ink spilled all over my books but the diary had nothing on it at all. So finally I decided to write in it. I just wrote, 'my name is Harry Potter'. The diary wrote back! He was there fifty years ago when the chamber was opened. He showed me his memory. Hagrid opened the Chamber of Secrets fifty years ago!*

*I can't believe it! I don't want to believe it! But I guess I have to go talk to him.*

*Love,  
Harry*

**Dear Harry,**

**I don't believe that Hagrid opened it. I always wondered why he got expelled though. He never did tell me. This diary sounds odd. I'm sorry about Hermione, but I'm glad that she's getting better. I think that you should go talk to Hagrid. You would be one of the people that he would trust enough to tell the truth to.**

**Moony got back from his trip a few days ago and says hello. He's curious about what's going on with the chamber as well, as I've tried to fill him in on as much as I could. He also says that he seems to recall something about it but he's not sure what. It will come to him eventually. Also, he didn't get much out of the trip, just some ancient scriptures and scrolls written in ancient Sumerian and Babylonian. He's not sure if they will be any help. But he has a lot of research to do about it first.**

**The Valentine thing is funny, I'm sorry. It was clever though and I give Fred and George credit. I suppose it's better than the Valentine I sent to Lily in sixth year. It went something like — Roses are red, violets are blue, Lily is beautiful, and the flowers are too!**

**She wasn't too impressed and still refused to go out with me. But I wore her down.**

**Keep me updated on what's going on.**

**Love,  
Da**

*Dear Da,*

*Nothing has happened and the Hufflepuffs' are even being nice to me again. Fred and George have been making the entire thing out to be a joke, walking in front of me and announcing that the heir of Slytherin is coming. It makes me feel better to know that they think it's a joke.*

*We got our course subject selection sheets for next year. I have no idea what I want to take.*

*Someone stole Riddle's diary from my trunk. This has me worried as only a Gryffindor could have taken it. I heard the voice again before my Quidditch match and Hermione didn't hear it or Ron. Then she said that she thought she understood something and ran off to the library. That's what Hermione does – when in doubt, go to the library. The match was cancelled, the last one of the season because Hermione and a Ravenclaw girl named Penelope Clearwater have been petrified. They were found with a mirror.*

*Ron and I went down to Hagrid's cabin last night. After what happened to Hermione, we knew that we had to talk to him. But then Dumbledore arrived with the Minister of Magic. We hid in the corner under the invisibility cloak. Fudge wanted to arrest Hagrid for the attacks! Then Lucius Malfoy came in and said that the governors have ordered for Dumbledore to be suspended from the school!*

*Dumbledore's gone and Hagrid is in Azkaban. And before he left he said that if someone wanted to learn some stuff, then they should follow the spiders. Weird advice.*

*Love,  
Harry*

**Dear Harry,**

**I know about Hagrid and Dumbledore. Just be careful since the school is in chaos. Malfoy must have done something because everyone knows that the school is safer with Dumbledore there than without. Don't worry about Riddle's diary, right now just concentrate on your studies and on Hermione. She should be unpetrified soon.**

**Moony says that he remembers that the chamber was supposed to hold a monster that would rid the school of non-purebloods. I'm pretty sure that you already knew that. Follow the spiders? Isn't Ron deathly afraid of spiders? You're not thinking of taking Hagrid's advice are you? Need I remind you of Fluffy and Norbert?**

**Love,  
Da**

*Dear Da,*

*Ron and I were in Herbology and we saw spiders fleeing the castle again. So we decided to follow them. Or rather, I decided because Ron is afraid of spiders. (He broke Fred's toy broomstick when he was five and Fred turned his teddy bear into a spider — funny that you remember Ron's fear). Anyway, so after dinner, we followed them into the Forbidden Forest. We found Mr. Weasley's car, its running wild in the forest. But then we were captured by these giant spiders that brought us to their leader, Aragog. Apparently, Aragog was the monster that Hagrid kept in the castle when he went to Hogwarts. Hagrid didn't open the Chamber of Secrets, he was framed for it.*

*They were going to kill us, then but then Mr. Weasley's car came speeding in, so we hopped in with Fang, who we brought along for protection even though he is a coward, and took off. The car brought us back to the edge of the forest and then disappeared back into the forest. But now we know, Hagrid is innocent. We learned something else too. The last time that the chamber was opened a girl died in the bathroom – Moaning Myrtle.*

*We tried to go talk to Myrtle but we didn't have time. McGonagall says that the people who have been petrified will be revived tonight. Ginny came to see us at dinner. She looked really pale and was shaking, kind of rocking back and forth. She said that she had something really important to tell us. Then Percy came and kicked her out of his chair. Percy says that she didn't have anything important to say because he already knows what it was. But I don't believe it. She looked like something was up. Well, we're going to visit Hermione now, and then we're going to try to visit Moaning Myrtle.*

*Love,  
Harry*

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry stepped into the chamber, looking over his shoulder briefly and wondering if Ron was alright. Professor Lockhart had tried to hit them with a memory charm instead of helping them try to rescue Ginny. There had been a cave-in and now Harry was separated from Ron and Lockhart. He hoped that Ron was making some leeway in the pile of rocks. He stopped in his tracks when he heard voices, ducking behind a huge stone statue of a snake.

"I won't!" Ginny's voice rang out.

"You will do what I order you to do!" A boy's voice echoed in anger.  
"Or you will pay the consequences!"

"There's nothing you can do to me!" Ginny demanded. "You won't get Harry! He's not going to come save me, Tom!"

The boy, Tom, grinned. "Have you finally realized that he wants nothing to do with you, little Ginny? You're nothing but a pathetic little girl that he sees as filth on his shoes. No one will even miss you when you're gone."

Ginny cowered slightly. "People will miss me, Bill and C-Charlie."

Tom chuckled. "Bill's busy in Egypt and Charlie is in Romania. Don't you see? They moved there to get away from you! Crucio!"

Ginny's screams echoed off the chamber walls and Harry felt his heart freeze.

"Do you know how to summon a basilisk, Ginny Weasley?"

She crawled to her feet, her lip was bleeding and her entire body was trembling. "I won't let you attack any more muggleborns!"

Tom grinned maliciously. "No? My basilisk is hungry though. Well, I suppose a pureblood will be fine too. You're such a blood traitor anyway, he won't know the difference."

Ginny trembled slightly. "You-you can't control the monster."

"Of course I can. He listens to me. Of course, he won't touch you because you're a pureblood ... unless ..."

"Unless what?" Ginny asked, her voice shaking as her eyes stayed on her wand in Tom's hands.

"The blood of an innocent usually gets his attention."

Ginny paled and took a step back. "Blood of a ... what?"

Tom's grin widened, an odd red glow in his eyes. "Hmm, there are many ways I could take that innocence from you, young Ginny. All of them would be fun and entertaining." He grabbed her by the front of her robes, ripping her cloak down the middle so that she stood in her blouse and kilt. "Wouldn't you agree?"

Tears rolled down Ginny's cheeks as she struggled in his arms. "No!"

"Crucio!"

Ginny fell to the floor again, screaming but this time she faded out and didn't wake up. Tom grinned down at her. "Looks like I'm finally coming back."

Harry was trembling as he stepped out from behind the statue. This boy, this prefect who had told him Hagrid had opened the chamber was nothing but a lie. What he had just ... Harry hurried forward, ready to fight Tom Riddle but when he landed in front of Ginny, he was gone.

He dropped his wand on the ground and began to shake her gently. "Ginny, Ginny! Please Ginny, don't be dead! I'm sorry, I wasn't fast enough, don't be dead. I'm sorry I hid. Please Ginny!"

"She won't wake," Tom Riddle's voice echoed behind him.

Harry turned around and stared up into those cold eyes. "What do you mean she won't wake, she's not ...?"

"Dead? No, not yet."

Harry's heart was pounding as he lifted her up into his arms. "I'm taking her out of here."

Tom smiled. "No, I don't think you will be."

When Harry realized Tom was rolling his wand through his fingers, he gulped. He wasn't getting out of here without a fight and he was taking Ginny with him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry took a deep breath as he, Ron, Lockhart, and Ginny stood outside of McGonagall's office a few hours later. He clasped his hand tightly in Ginny's and gave her a small smile.



“It’ll be alright, I promise.”

Tears continued to roll down her cheeks as she nodded. Her eyes cast down to the floor and she was visibly trembling.

Ron nodded at his sister. “Really Gin, we won’t let them expel you. It wasn’t your fault ... whatever happened ... it ... it wasn’t you.”

Ginny sniffled a bit and her grip tightened on Harry’s hand.

Harry gave Ron a look that told him to stop talking and he gently squeezed her hand in support before he pushed open the door.

Harry stepped into McGonagall’s office, still holding Ginny’s hand tightly in his own. He was covered in blood and held a bloody sword in his hand, along with a mangled diary with a huge snake fang through it, and the school Sorting Hat. Ron and Lockhart stood behind him and he had Fawkes, Dumbledore’s phoenix, on his shoulder. He glanced up at a shocked McGonagall, a smiling Dumbledore, and a worried James and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley.

Mrs. Weasley shrieked as she ran to Ginny, cuddling the girl in her arms. James walked to Harry, shaking his head as he took the sword and diary from him before placing it on the desk before pulling Harry tightly into his arms.

“You have a lot of explaining to do.”

Harry nodded but then he heard Ginny’s voice. “It was me! It was all me!”

Mrs. Weasley looked at her daughter in confusion. “What on earth do you mean, Ginny?”

Harry turned to the room and he began to explain. He started from the beginning. He explained about the voice that he had heard in the walls and how no one else had heard it. About how he could speak Parseltongue and everyone thought that he was the heir of Slytherin. How he found the diary and saw the memory of Hagrid being framed for opening the chamber the first time. How the diary being stolen

back. He told them about following the spiders into the forest and what they learned from Aragog. He spoke of finding the paper rolled in Hermione's hand that explained about the roosters being killed and the spiders fleeing and that the monster was a basilisk. That was why Harry could hear it. He explained how the basilisk had been using the pipes. The adults were amazed when he said that he and Ron had gone to tell Lockhart that they suspected where the chamber was. They had to drag Lockhart into Moaning Myrtle's bathroom and learned how she died. Harry had then opened the chamber.

Harry had stopped to take a sip of water. He looked at Ginny for a moment, deciding to skip the part of what he had overheard between Ginny and Tom. He continued to explain how he had met Tom Riddle, killed the basilisk and brought Ginny and the others to safety. He tried to leave Ginny out of it as much as he could, as he was worried that she might be expelled. Then Dumbledore spoke.

"What I am curious about is how Lord Voldemort managed to open the chamber when my sources tell me that he is in Albania?"

Harry sighed in relief. "Through this diary, sir."

Ginny sniffed as she broke away from her parents. "It was me, sir, I've been writing in it all year."

"Ginny!" Mrs. Weasley exclaimed.

Mr. Weasley knelt down in front of his daughter. "Haven't I told you never to trust anything when you can't see where it keeps its brain?"

Ginny nodded. "I'm so sorry." She wiped at the tears on her cheeks and cuddled into her father's arms. "I didn't know, Daddy. I thought he was just ... he ... I thought he was my friend."

Arthur kissed the top of her head as he held her close. "It's alright, Princess. Everyone makes mistakes. It's not your fault." He kissed his daughter's cheeks, keeping his arms around her as she curled into him.

"I'm going to be expelled!"

Dumbledore smiled. "No dear, not today. Older and wiser witches than you have been fooled by Voldemort. Why don't you go down to the hospital wing with your parents, Madam Pomfrey will fix you right up?"

Once they left the room, Dumbledore turned to Harry and Ron. "I believe that I told you at the beginning of the year that if you two were to break any more school rules you would be expelled."

They gulped.

"But I suppose that sometimes we can eat our own words. You will each be awarded 200 points for your bravery and will get a special award for services to the school. Mr. Weasley, can you please take this letter up to the owlery and send it to Azkaban prison, we need our gamekeeper back."

Ron nodded and left the room, leaving Harry alone with James and Dumbledore.

Dumbledore smiled at Harry. "Harry, first of all, thank you. You must have shown me great loyalty down in the chamber, as nothing but that would have brought Fawkes to you. Why don't you tell me what you have on your mind?"

Harry squirmed in his seat and glanced up at his Da before turning to Dumbledore. "Riddle, he said that ... he said that I'm a lot like him. And I can speak Parseltongue and the Sorting Hat told me that I would have done well in Slytherin."

"Harry! You shouldn't listen to that. He was only trying to trick you!" James demanded, angrily.

Dumbledore nodded, ignoring James' comment. "He was right of course. You are a lot like Tom Riddle. You are both smart, have a certain flair for breaking the rules, and you both can speak Parseltongue. I believe that you can speak Parseltongue because Lord Voldemort can speak Parseltongue. That night, Harry, when he tried to kill you, I think that he unknowingly transferred some of his

powers to you. Not intentionally, but I think that he did.”

Harry gulped. “So I should have been in Slytherin.”

Dumbledore shook his head. “No, Harry. Why were you put in Gryffindor?”

“Because I asked it to.”

Dumbledore smiled. “Exactly. It is our choices, Harry, that dictate who we are. That is what makes you different from Lord Voldemort. If you need further proof of where you belong take a closer look at this sword.”

Harry glanced at the bloody sword that he had used to kill the basilisk. It said Godric Gryffindor.

“Only a true Gryffindor could have pulled that out of the hat.”

Harry grinned just as Lucius Malfoy walked into the room dragging Dobby by the pillowcase that he wore.

“So you’re back. Even though you were suspended.”

Dumbledore grinned. “Ah, Lucius, funny thing, but the governors seemed to think that you had threatened to curse their families, if they didn’t sign in the first place.”

Mr. Malfoy made a growling noise in his throat before he glared at Harry, where he stood holding the sword with James’ hand on his shoulder. “So, did you find the culprit?”

Dumbledore nodded. “We did. It was the same person as last time. Voldemort. It seems that he enchanted Ginny Weasley by means of this diary.”

Harry’s eyes were on Dobby, who was pointing from the diary to Mr. Malfoy and then smacking himself on the head. Harry nodded then. “Mr. Malfoy, it was you. You put the diary in Ginny’s cauldron that day in *Flourish and Blotts*.”

Dumbledore smiled then and James grinned as well.

Mr. Malfoy sneered. "Prove it."

Dumbledore shook his head. "Oh I don't think that there will be a need for that. Make sure that none of Voldemort's old school things happen to find their way into innocent hands again. Good day."

Mr. Malfoy turned and stormed out of the room, dragging Dobby with him.

"Good job, Harry." James replied. "Now we know where the diary came from."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, Professor can I have that diary?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Sure, Harry."

Harry grinned and grabbed it before he hurried out of the office, leaving James and Dumbledore staring after him curiously. He pulled his sock off and shoved the small diary inside, then he ran after Mr. Malfoy.

"Mr. Malfoy, you forgot something!" He called out as he ran after him. When Mr. Malfoy turned around he shoved the diary into his hands. "You forgot something."

Mr. Malfoy pulled the sock off the diary and tossed it off to the side before he sneered. "You'll meet the same sticky end as your mother one day. Come Dobby."

But Dobby was staring at the mouldy sweaty black sock in his hand in awe. "Master has given Dobby a sock. Dobby is free."

"What, I didn't give you a damn sock?" He turned and growled. "You lost me my servant boy!" He took out his wand and pointed it at Harry just as James stepped in front of him.

"Touch my son and you will wish that you had never been born." He

stated coldly.

Mr. Malfoy turned on his heel and stormed out of the castle.

Dobby grinned up at Harry in admiration. "Harry Potter freed Dobby! How can Dobby ever repay you, sir?"

Harry grinned. "Promise to never try to save my life again."

James laughed as Dobby promised and then they began to make their way down to the hospital wing. "You did a good thing tonight."

Harry glanced up at his father. "You're not mad?"

James shrugged. "Of course I'm mad. You went down there, not knowing what you were facing. You could have been seriously hurt or worse but ... I would have done the same thing so I guess lecturing wouldn't have much point."

"I couldn't just leave her down there Da. Lockhart wasn't going to do anything. He didn't even care! We didn't have time to try to find someone else and ... we had to."

"I know. Ginny is a very lucky girl to have two young men that care about her so much that they would risk their lives. You may not know her very well but you care because she's your best mate's sister. That means something and you did a good thing tonight. I'm proud of you."

Harry smiled. "So I'm not in trouble then?"

James laughed. "Oh you're in trouble. You're grounded for three weeks with no Quidditch. But I'm still proud of you."

Harry sighed as they stepped into the hospital wing. "It was worth a shot."

James grinned. "A true Marauder has to face the consequences for his actions. Now come on, let's go see how Ginny's doing and get Madam Pomfrey to check you over. After battling a giant basilisk and

a memory of Voldemort ... I think you need to be checked out.”

Harry grinned. “Sure Da.”

James slipped his arm around his son’s shoulders and shook his head silently. Like father, like son.

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The feast was fun, Ron and Harry’s 400 points caused them to win the House Cup for Gryffindor again. The train ride home was filled with laughter and last minute bits of magic. Ginny told them that she had caught Percy kissing Penelope Clearwater – which was what Percy thought she was going to tell Harry and Ron about before.

When they arrived at the platform, Harry waved goodbye to his friends and got a hug from Hermione, which caused him to blush. Then he went home with his Da. Another eventful year had passed.

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## **Chapter 9: Black, Birthday, and DADA**

**Author’s Notes:** hope u guys enjoy this chapter - things are beginning to change now! please review!! newly edited

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## **Chapter IX – Black, Birthday, and DADA**

Harry was grinning when he came down the stairs and into the kitchen a few weeks later. His summer had been a blast so far. First, he had only actually been grounded for five days. Second, he had regular correspondence with Ron, Hermione, and Neville; and third, his Da and Uncle Remus had taken him on a trip to Australia. They had spent a week there, living in a house that the Potters apparently owned. They had gone sight seeing and had spent some time on the beach. It had been a lot of fun. Remus had even met with a man who had a bit of information on lycanthropy; he carefully added this man’s

information to his research.

Harry knew that James had chosen the trip to try to get Harry's mind off of what had happened in June. He knew that his Da was not overly pleased to know that his son's first two years at Hogwarts had brought him face to face with Voldemort twice. James also knew that Harry was having nightmares.

Harry hadn't told his father about the dreams that he was having. He didn't want to worry him. But the dreams came often. A mix of manic laughter with flashes of green light, Quirrell's body with Voldemort's head, Ginny twitching on the floor as Voldemort held her under the Cruciatus Curse, a giant basilisk and Ginny lying almost dead on the cold chamber floor. He would wake up and cuddle Foolish to him, glad that the dog was there to make him feel better. But James knew about the dreams. He could hear Harry thrashing about and moaning in his sleep. But he didn't say anything about it because he knew that Harry would tell him in good time.

Harry pushed the thoughts from his mind as he entered the kitchen where James and Remus were sitting, looking solemn. Those were not the faces that Harry was looking for on his thirteenth birthday.

"What's up?" Harry asked as he sat down and began to help himself to the French toast that Maddy had made.

James looked at Harry, his eyes dark. "Harry, we need to talk about something."

Harry glanced up at his father and uncle in surprise. He very rarely heard such a serious note coming from his father's voice. "Alright."

James dropped the paper that he was reading in his son's lap. Harry picked it up and read the title above the picture:

## **SIRIUS BLACK HAS ESCAPED FROM AZKABAN PRISON**

Written by: *Jonathon Jackson*

*Sirius Black, 31, escaped from Azkaban Prison sometime late last night. The Dementors are furious and have no idea how he managed*



*to escape the well-guarded facility. The Ministry of Magic is in an uproar, as no one has ever escaped before.*

*Black was imprisoned for his crime twelve years ago. He murdered Peter Pettigrew, 19, in the middle of a crowded muggle street with one curse. Nothing was left of Pettigrew but a finger. Thirteen muggles were killed as well. Black massacred them. Then, he stood in the middle of the street laughing like a loon.*

*Everyone knows the story of the Boy Who Lived. Black was the Secret Keeper for Lily and James Potter. But Black was secretly working for He Who Must Not Be Named. He led You-Know-Who to the Potters and betrayed his best friends.*

*The Muggle Prime Minister has been notified as well and the muggle population has been told that Black has been carrying a gun (sort of like a metal wand that can cause death or severe injury and makes a loud bang when fired). All of the U.K. is looking for him. Black is armed and extremely dangerous. If anyone has seen him, please contact the Magical Law Enforcement immediately.*

Harry put the paper down and looked up at his father. "I thought that Pettigrew was the Secret Keeper?"

James nodded. "He was, but no one else knew that. Sirius led Voldemort to Peter, who in his fear, gave away our spot and led Voldemort straight to us. If that wasn't bad enough, after Lily and I were presumed dead, he murdered Peter. He doesn't even know that Lily and I ... he thinks that we're both dead."

Remus placed a comforting hand on James' shoulder before turning to Harry. "Harry, listen, Black is dangerous. He did something terrible so many years ago and neither James nor I will ever forgive him for it. It is because of him that your mother is dead. As soon as he was put into prison, we didn't want to believe that he had really done it. But the evidence was against him. Now he has escaped. That puts you in danger."

"Why am I in danger?" When no one answered he stood up, realizing instantly what they were thinking. "Come on, you don't believe that he

escaped Azkaban to come after me, do you? Because that would be ridiculous!”

James stood up as well, his eyes flashing. “I do. The Dementors say that in his sleep he’s been murmuring ‘he’s at Hogwarts’. He believes that both Lily and I are dead. And Cornelius Fudge believes that he thinks that by killing you, it will bring Voldemort back. Azkaban makes you crazy, Harry! He is crazy!”

Harry gulped. He wanted to protest but behind the anger that he could see flashing in his father’s eyes he saw fear so he only nodded. “Okay, I’ll be careful.”

James nodded. “Good. I have to head into work. Remus says that you got some mail. Don’t go off the property.”

Harry nodded. “I won’t. I promise.”

James nodded and then he pulled Harry close to him in fierce hug. “I love you.”

“Sheesh, Da, I’ll be fine.” Harry replied.

James pulled back and smiled. “I’ll see you later tonight. Happy Birthday.”

Harry nodded and watched his father head into the entrance hall so that he could leave by floo. Then he turned to Remus. “Uncle Moony are you really worried about Sirius Black too?”

Remus nodded. “He’s dangerous, Harry. He’s dangerous because he fooled us, the two people who thought we knew him better than anyone else. It hit James the hardest. He was his best mate. James and Sirius met each other when they were eight years old when their parents had been vacationing in France. Eleven years they were best friends and that was how Sirius repaid him. James took it hard and he refused to believe it. But at the time that everything happened, James was taking care of Lily and ... the evidence was against him.”

“I won’t go out on my own.”

Remus grinned. "Good. Here, some mail arrived for you this morning. Happy birthday." He handed Harry a stack of letters.

Harry grinned. "Thanks." He opened the first one and grinned when he recognized Ron's writing.

**Hey Harry,**

**Guess what? Dad won 200 galleons in some draw at the ministry. We were all really surprised. So we went on a trip to Egypt to see Bill. He works as a curse breaker there you know. We even got our picture in the paper. It was really neat. Bill took us into all of these ancient tombs where people were cursed and half destroyed and stuff. It was wicked. The pyramids were neat too. Mum wouldn't let Ginny go into some of the tombs, thought they were too barbaric. But between me, Bill, Fred, and George, she knows all about it anyway.**

**We just got home yesterday. Hope to hear from you soon.**

**Ron**

He grinned as he looked at the picture that was sent along with it. There were the Weasleys, grinning at the camera. Even Scabbers, Ron's rat was in the picture. Even Ginny had a smile on her face as she waved at the camera standing next to Mr. Weasley. Harry wondered how she was doing after what had happened in June. He made a mental note to himself to talk to her about it and to make sure that she realized that he was there for her as a friend. He put the picture down and looked at the small parcel that had come along with it. He opened it up and found a strange device that he had never seen before. Then he saw the note with it.

**Harry,**

**This is sneakoscope. It's supposed to tell you when something dark or fishy is happening around you. I got it in Egypt. Happy Birthday! Bill says that it was a waste of money and that it's never reliable because it started going off during dinner, but**

**Fred and George put beetles in his soup.**

**Ron**

Harry laughed as he put his gift on the table just as Maddy came in."

Maddy smiled. "Good morning, Harry. Happy birthday."

He grinned. "Thanks." He opened the next letter which had Hermione's nice neat writing on it.

**Harry,**

**Happy Birthday! I just returned from a holiday in France with my parents. It was very nice and I learned lots of new things. I went to all sorts of museums to occupy my time since my parents had a few dental conventions. I also made sure I visited all sorts of national landmarks both muggle and magical. I had a lovely time. That essay we have to write about on witch burning? Well I got so much new information here in France that it's a little longer than Professor Binns asked. I hope he doesn't mind. Have you started yours yet?**

**Did you see Ron's picture in the paper? It's so wonderful that they went to Egypt. I bet the trip was really exciting and that they learned a whole lot. Imagine how exciting it would be to go through the ancient tombs! Anyway, I saw this gift at the bottom of the Daily Prophet and I thought that it was good for you. I hope you like it.**

**With love,  
Hermione**

Harry took the parcel off the table. It was a large box. He ripped the paper off and gasped. "Wow, Hermione." He murmured. It was a Broomstick Servicing Kit. He flipped open the lid and began to look at all the pretty bottles and clippers. He never would have expected such a great gift from Hermione.

He put the gift down and picked up Neville's letter next.

## **Happy Birthday Harry!**

**It's kind of neat that our birthdays are so close together, mine being just the day before yours. So, ha! I turned 13 before you! I hope that you've had a good summer so far. Mine has been alright, my Uncle Algie took me fishing in a muggle village. It was an interesting experience. Have you ever been fishing? Bit of a weird sport if you ask me, but apparently muggles are mad for it! Well, I'll see you when school starts up.**

## **Neville**

Harry laughed as he opened the package that had come with it. Neville had sent him a book on muggle sports, including fishing. There was also a book on the history of Pride of Portree's Quidditch team. He moved onto Hagrid's letter next. He ripped it open and began to read the untidy scrawl.

## **Happy Birthday Harry!**

**I hope that you're having a good summer. I just wanted to thank you again for clearing my name. It means a lot to me. I never could have done it without the help of you, Ron, and Hermione. The gift I sent you, well, you will need it, but I won't say nothing more about it — you'll understand later.**

## **Hagrid**

Harry glanced at the parcel. He would need it? He ripped it open and then he jumped back in shock as the book jumped up ready to attack him. It fell to the floor, jaws munching as it headed towards him. He stood up on his chair and carefully watched it move under the table. He untied his shoe and dropped it on the floor. The book came rushing out from under the table so he jumped down and landed on it. This seemed to stop its movement though it did make a whining sound. He yelled for Maddy and when she came into the room she eyed him quizzically.

"Um, Harry, why is you standing on your book?"

Harry grinned. "Because it's trying to bite me. Can you please get me some rope or a belt or something?"

Maddy nodded and hurried out of the room. She came back a few minutes later with some rope. Harry carefully tied the book up before he stepped off of it. Then he picked it up and put it on the table.

"Who is it from?" Maddy asked.

"Hagrid." Harry replied. "*The Monster Book of Monsters*. Only Hagrid would send me a biting book. Why on earth would I need this?"

Maddy shrugged. "I is not knowing, sir."

Harry grinned and then he shrugged. "Well, thanks Maddy. I guess I'll bring this stuff upstairs now."

He gathered up his new gifts and headed upstairs into his room, wondering why he would be needing a biting book.

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When James came home from work that evening, he still looked the worse for wear. He had been involved in the search for Sirius Black and he was thoroughly exhausted, especially from his habitual last stop of the day. Every time he went there he became more exhausted and depressed. He plopped himself down into the living room and Harry looked up from where he was sitting.

"What are you reading?"

Harry grinned. "*Helter Skelter* by Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry. Uncle Remus picked it up for me."

James nodded. "Is it any good?"

"Yeah, disturbing, but good. It's a true story, about this guy named Charles Manson who convinced these people to murder others in cold blood. It happened in Los Angeles, California in the 1960s,

muggles of course.” Harry explained. “You look really tired.”

James sighed. “Probably because I am really tired. I’m exhausted. I’ve spent the last ten hours searching for Sirius with some other Aurors. We haven’t found anything.”

Harry nodded. “I’ll ask Maddy if you can eat dinner in here. That way you don’t have to get up.”

James grinned. “I’m alright, Harry. I’m not too hungry at the moment.”

“Da, I don’t think that you have anything to worry about. So he escaped! Do you honestly think that he’s going to come after me? I mean, I’m not worried. He can’t be as bad as Voldemort. Besides, I’m going to be here with you and then at Hogwarts with Dumbledore. I’ll be safe.”

James nodded. “I’m still going to worry. Harry ... he betrayed me in the worst possible way. How would you react if you trusted Ron with a secret that meant life and death, and he revealed it? I felt like a piece of my heart had been ripped out when I found out what Sirius had done. I lost my wife, and my best mate all in one go. So, yeah, I’m going to worry about it.” He sighed. “I’ve got your birthday gift on my bed. I meant to give it to you this morning, but I was distracted.”

Harry smiled. “Don’t worry about it, Da. I’ll go up and get it. Are you sure that you don’t want Maddy to bring you some food in here?”

James shook his head. “Yes, I’m sure. I’m not very hungry at the moment.” He reached out to scratch Foolish behind the ears as the dog rested his head on his knee.

Harry nodded and hurried upstairs and into his father’s bedroom. He grinned when he saw the beautifully wrapped box sitting in the middle of the bed. He picked it up and raced downstairs with it in his arms. It was really heavy. He dropped it down onto the couch. “Jeesh, Da, what’s in this thing? It weighs a ton!”

James laughed. “Something that I think you’ll enjoy. Open it up.”

Harry was grinning as he ripped open the wrapping paper and pulled out what looked like a trunk, but it was pretty small. "Um ... is this a trunk?"

James grinned and used a quick enlarging charm to fix the trunk. "I shrunk it down to wrap it. Open it up."

Harry lifted the lid and found a small shelf that sat on the top of the trunk along with a key-ring. There were five keys on it. "What are the keys for?"

James grinned as he stood up to stand next to his son. "The compartments. There are five compartments in this trunk that match the five locks on the front. Here let me show you."

He lifted the tiny shelf, which contained small compartments for money or other valuables that needed easy access, out of the top which showed the trunk with small compartments to store things in. Then he closed the lid, turned another key into the second lock and re-opened the trunk. It looked completely different. This compartment held drawers and small shelves. He closed the lid again and used the third lock. This time there was a room.

"Wow!" Harry replied as he stared down into the trunk.

James laughed. "Care to step inside?"

They stepped inside the trunk, walking down the stairs that had appeared. Inside was a room full of bookshelves that lined the walls and a desk with a comfortable chair in the corner. There was a door to the left and through it was a tiny kitchen with a table, a wizarding fridge and stove as well as other appropriate appliances. There was another door to the left that led into a room with a Queen-sized bed, a dresser, and a nightstand. The last door led into a small bathroom with a full-sized stand up shower, a toilet, and a sink.

"It's a house!" Harry exclaimed.

James grinned. "This cost extra but I thought that it was neat. You can actually live in this trunk. I thought that you might enjoy having



your own bathroom for when you're at school. I remember trying to get into the shower and having to fight for a stall in the dorm loos. The rest you probably won't need for years ahead, but I thought that it was neat. The bookshelves in the study will be good for you. I don't know about you, but I found that having to bring all of my textbooks to school every year was a bit stressful and I was beginning to run out of room by my third year. You can put the books that you don't use on an everyday basis on the shelves, this way you can bring along more books for pleasure. Ready to see the next compartment?"

"This is wicked!" Harry replied, grinning broadly as he followed his father back up the stairs and out of the trunk.

James laughed. "It is, yes. I thought it was pretty brilliant. Moody has one actually and I got the idea from it. His is very old though and not nearly as clever as yours."

Harry laughed. "I agree, it is brilliant!"

James stuck the next key into the fourth lock, revealing drawers and compartments for clothes. The fifth and final compartment was filled with tiny slots for quills, ink, parchment, folders, and finished assignments or projects.

"I thought that this compartment would be useful. It will help you stay more organized and this way you won't ever lose assignments you've completed before it's time to hand them in." James explained. "Well, what do you think?"

Harry grinned and then he launched himself into his father's arms. "This is the coolest gift ever! I love it! Thanks Da."

James grinned as he held his son tight, kissing the top of his head and clinging to him a second longer than was necessary. "Good. Now, let's cart this thing upstairs. Did you get your Hogwarts letter today?"

Harry nodded; he could still see the worry in his father's eyes. "Yeah, but I didn't open it yet."

"Okay, well let's just put your school books on these new cool

bookshelves first.”

Harry grinned. “Okay.”

They headed upstairs and into his room and he began to hand his textbooks from the last two years of school to his father. There were sixteen textbooks to place into the trunk:

*The Standard Book of Spells Grade One* by Miranda Goshawk  
*A History of Magic* by Bathilda Bagshot  
*Magical Theory* by Adalbert Waffling  
*A Beginner’s Guide to Transfiguration* by Emeric Switch  
*One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi* by Phyllida Spore  
*Magical Drafts and Potions* by Arsenius Jigger  
*Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* by Newt Scamander  
*The Dark Forces: A Guide to Self-Protection* by Quentin Trimble  
*The Standard Book of Spells Grade Two* by Miranda Goshawk  
*Break with a Banshee* by Gilderoy Lockhart  
*Gadding with Ghouls* by Gilderoy Lockhart  
*Holiday with Hags* by Gilderoy Lockhart  
*Travels with Trolls* by Gilderoy Lockhart  
*Voyages with Vampires* by Gilderoy Lockhart  
*Wandering with Werewolves* by Gilderoy Lockhart  
*Year with the Yeti* by Gilderoy Lockhart

Once his books were all stacked neatly on the shelves in his trunk, he ripped open the Hogwarts letter. “Okay, well my classes this year are Charms, Herbology, Transfiguration, DADA, History of Magic, Potions, Care of Magical Creatures, Divination and Ancient Runes. And for my books this year I need *Unfogging the Future* by Cassandra Vablatsky, *Intermediate Transfiguration* by Emeric Switch, *The Standard Book of Spells Grade Three* by Miranda Goshawk, *The Monster Book of Monsters* ... hey! Hagrid sent me this book for my birthday. Said I would need it. The book attacked me!”

James laughed. “The book attacked you?”

Harry nodded. He reached into his old trunk and pulled it out. It was still tied tightly together with the rope wrapped around it. “Yeah, it’s a biting book.”

James shrugged. "Well, good thing you need it as, if it bites, I can't see you reading it on your own. I guess you'll figure out from your instructor how to read it."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Yeah, as long as it doesn't tear itself apart in the process." He turned his attention back to his book list as James gave the biting book its own special shelf in the trunk. "And I need *Ancient Runes Made Easy* and a *Rune Dictionary*."

"Okay, I understand why you signed up for Care of Magical Creatures and Ancient Runes, I mean those classes would be fun and interesting. But Divination?" James asked. "What were you thinking?"

Harry shrugged, grinning. "Well, actually I just sort of closed my eyes and pointed my wand. Ron and Hermione are taking Divination too so at least I won't be bored alone."

James laughed. "Good point."

"Oh Da! There's also a permission slip in here that you need to sign. It allows me to go into the town of Hogsmeade! I forgot that third years are allowed to visit the village."

James grinned. "Yeah, I'll look at it later. Alright, we'll work on getting to Diagon Alley later. For now, let's go get some dinner, because now I'm hungry."

Harry laughed as he dropped his letter on the bed. "Alright, I could eat again."

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"HARRY! ARE YOU COMING OR WHAT?" James yelled up the staircase a few weeks later. They were on their way to Diagon Alley to meet with the Weasleys and Hermione to buy school supplies.

Harry ran down the stairs quickly, his wand in his hand. "Sorry Da, I was trying to find my belt."

James laughed as he glanced over at Harry. "You do own more than one belt, you know."

Harry grinned. "Well, I wanted to wear this one. I'm ready to go now."

James shook his head in amusement as he glanced at the black jeans and belt his son wore with the tee-shirt stating that he was a Pride of Portree fan before he motioned for him to go through the floo. They stepped into the fire place and flooed to Diagon Alley. As soon as they stepped into the street, Harry felt a thrill fly through him. He had been trapped for weeks inside of Potter Manor. His Da had naturally let him go outside and write letters to his friends and things, but because Sirius Black had escaped, Harry had been forced to stay at home. James was too worried that something would happen. Harry grinned when he saw Ron and Hermione arguing over potions ingredients in the Apothecary. He pointed them out to James and grinned.

"They're always doing that. They could drive a person batty with the way that they bicker with each other."

James grinned. "Maybe they like each other. Lily and I argued twenty-four/seven and we ended up married."

Harry glanced back at his two best friends and laughed. "Well, that I don't see happening." He headed over to his friends and caught snippets of their conversation.

"Don't be ridiculous, Ronald! Just because you've never had to buy this ingredient before doesn't mean that you'll never use it! Besides, according to the next few chapters of our textbook, this ingredient is listed! Which means that we will be using it in class!"

Ron groaned. "That doesn't bloody mean that Snape will assign that particular potion! Besides, what do you care if I fail or blow something up?"

"Why do I care that you two never stop bickering?" Harry asked. "Oh yeah, because it drives me bonkers!"

Ron and Hermione turned around and Hermione threw her arms around Harry's neck. "Harry! We've been wondering when you would show up."

Ron grinned. "Hey mate, how's it going?"

Harry grinned back. "Pretty good." Then when Hermione turned to talk to James, he leaned closer to Ron. "Just agree with her and get the damn ingredient before she drives us both mental."

Ron laughed. "You've got a point, mate." Then he grinned at James. "Hello, Mr. Potter."

"Hello, Ron, getting into another argument with Hermione, I see."

Ron shrugged. "It happens a lot."

The four of them headed off into the robes shop after that. Harry needed new robes as he had grown another few inches and his robes were all too short for him now. As they were leaving the store he noticed a large scruffy black dog staring at him from an alley way. He was about to point him out to Ron when the dog turned and hurried off. James then came out of Madam Malkin's.

"What are you staring at, Harry?"

Harry shrugged. "I ... nothing. I just thought I saw something."

James nodded. "Alright. Well, come on, you've still got quite a few things left to buy."

They bought books, potions ingredients, refilled on ink, quills, and parchment and then they went to look at the new Firebolt. The greatest and newest broom coming to Quidditch.

"Just look at it!" Ron moaned. "It's beautiful." He almost had his face pressed up against the window as he admired it.

James grinned. "All of the teams are getting them. Every Quidditch team in the world will be flying on these babies. I bet it flies like a

dream.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I bet it’s like gliding, probably doesn’t take any effort at all.”

Hermione groaned. “Oh come off it! It’s just a broomstick!”

“Hermione!” Ron gasped, holding a hand over his heart as if she had mortally wounded him. “This is not just a broomstick! This is the Holy Grail of all broomsticks!”

Hermione rolled her eyes and glanced at her watch. “Whatever. Besides, we’ve got to head down to the Leaky Cauldron. We promised that we would meet your parents for lunch in ten minutes.”

“Speaking of parents, where are your parents today, Hermione?” James asked as he let Ron and Harry ogle the broomstick a moment longer.

“Oh, they had to work. Dad dropped me off this morning.”

James nodded. “I see. You think they would have taken the day off, it is your last day before you return to school?”

Hermione shrugged. “They’re very busy.”

With James’ help, Hermione managed to drag Harry and Ron away from the Firebolt and into the Leaky Cauldron. Tables were pushed together so that the large group could eat together for lunch. Harry found himself sitting in between Ginny and George. James was sitting in between Percy and Mr. Weasley at the other end of the table and was busy chatting about something that had happened at the Ministry. Harry ate his sandwich happily. He was glad to be back with his friends and not stuck at home.

He turned to smile at Ginny who was picking at the food on her plate. She didn’t seem to be so shy around him anymore otherwise he was sure that she would have made a big deal out of sitting next to him. But he had known when her crush on him had faded because she had talked to him and hadn’t been so clumsy around him. It had

happened before he had saved her from the chamber. But now she seemed ... withdrawn. He almost wished for that shy, clumsy Ginny only so she didn't look so depressed.

"Hey, Ginny," Harry said quietly and she turned to look over at him in surprise. "I was just wondering, I mean ... well, how are you?"

Ginny continued to look at Harry in surprise. She hadn't expected him to talk to her, EVER! After all, she had almost gotten him killed only two months before. "Um, alright. I'm sorry, Harry."

He looked at her quizzically. "Sorry? What for?"

She shrugged. "For what happened in June. My stupidity almost got you killed."

"No!" Harry exclaimed. "Ginny that's not true. Voldemort tricked you into something. He made you depend on him. It wasn't your fault. And you didn't almost get me killed. That was my decision to go down into the chamber after you. Ron and Lockhart were with me ... not that Lockhart was much help, mind you, but we made the decision. I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Ginny managed a small smile then. "Thank you, Harry. But I could have gotten rid of Tom, I just ... didn't."

Harry shook his head no, and reached out to take her hand in his, oblivious to the many conversations going on around them. "No, he possessed you. He manipulated you. He took the emotions and the dreams of a young girl and he made them out to be something more. It was not your fault. I don't want to hear you blaming yourself, okay?"

Ginny nodded, her eyes alight with fresh tears that she furiously blinked back. "Okay."

He grinned at her. "Um, Ginny I was wondering ... have you had any ... well, dreams about the Chamber at all?"

Ginny nodded, answering before she could stop herself. "Almost every night. He comes out of the diary again. Why?"

He nodded at her. "I dream about it too. If you ... well er, I mean ... if you ever need to talk to someone about... what happened ... I'm here for you, alright? I just ... I wanted you to know that."

Ginny smiled, and Harry couldn't help but be surprised by how pretty she was when she genuinely smiled. Her chocolate brown eyes lit up her entire face. "Thank you. I just might take you up on that."

"Good. I could always use another friend." He replied and then he turned back to his meal, feeling better and like a small weight had been lifted off of his chest. He was surprised that he had mentioned the nightmares so casually but then again he suddenly felt close to Ginny because of the experience that they had shared. He shrugged and turned back to his meal. He hadn't been lying. He could always use another friend.

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When Harry and James returned to Potter Manor later on that evening, Remus was waiting for them in the entrance hall brimming with excitement.

"Moony, what's up?" James asked as he placed some of the bags that he was holding on the floor.

Remus grinned. "I just got a letter from Dumbledore. He wants me to be the new DADA teacher at Hogwarts. He told me that Snape is willing to brew the Wolfsbane potion for me."

James grinned. "Moony, that's great!" He reached over to hug his friend. Harry did the same.

They both knew why this meant so much to him. Remus had a lot of trouble finding work because of his condition. He was hired because of his good qualifications but as soon as people figured out that he was a werewolf he lost his job. Harry remembered his Da saying that Remus used to be an Auror with James but he had to leave when the new department head discovered his condition. This was a good opportunity for him.



“Uncle Remus ... I mean Professor Lupin. That’s awesome! You’ll make a great teacher! Much better then Lockhart anyway!” Harry exclaimed.

Remus grinned. “Thanks Harry. You won’t mind? I mean, having me as a professor might be a little awkward for you.”

Harry shook his head. “No, it won’t be. I know you won’t play favourites or anything or you know, set me apart from everyone else. You’re going to be great! Did you accept the job yet?”

Remus shook his head. “No, I wanted to wait until you guys came home. I’ll owl Dumbledore right away.”

He hurried off and James turned to Harry. “This will be good for you, having Moony at school with you. Especially with Sirius on the loose. He’ll stay close and he’ll be watching over you.”

Harry nodded. “I know. Tonight’s the full moon.”

James nodded. “It is. I’m going to go out with him tonight, that means you must –”

“Stay in the house at all times.” Harry supplied dutifully. “I know the drill, Da.”

James grinned. “That you do.”

Harry grinned. “Is it hard to become an animagus?”

James shrugged. “A bit yeah, you have to work hard at it. It took me two years to get it straight. I started training for it when I was your age.”

“Do you think that I could become an animagus?”

James grinned. “I don’t see why not. Do you want to be?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I think that it would be cool. Can you teach

me?”

James grinned. “Sure. But we won’t be able to work on that until next summer. School starts tomorrow.”

“I know.”

James laughed. “And it’s getting late. Why don’t you go pack your new things in your new trunk and get ready for bed? I’m going to go talk to Remus and then head outside before the moon comes out. Is there anything that you need?”

Harry shook his head. “Nope.”

James grinned. “Alright then, Sport, see you in the morning. Goodnight, Harry.”

“Night.” Harry called out as grabbed his bags full of purchases and headed upstairs. Tomorrow, he would be starting his third year at Hogwarts.

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## **Chapter 10: New Friends and Dementors**

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter X – New Friends and Dementors**

Harry stepped into one of the train compartments with Remus the next day. Together, they loaded up Hedwig’s cage and both of their trunks up onto the top racks before Remus took a seat on the bench near the window. Harry knew that he was tired. Last night had been the full moon, and he had run wild all night with James. Harry knew that also meant that Remus could sleep away the day and most likely would. He slept like the dead which amused Harry to no end. The man could tune out anything. He grinned when Ron, Hermione, and

Ginny stepped into the compartment.

“Hey guys!”

Hermione smiled but gave them a puzzled look at the sight of Remus. “Hello, Harry, Mr. Lupin.”

“Make that Professor Lupin,” Harry replied with a grin. “Uncle Moony has accepted the new DADA post.”

Ginny grinned. “Congratulations, Professor.”

Remus grinned back. “Thanks, I am pretty happy about it. Well, don’t mind me; I think I’m going to take a little nap.” Then just like that, he closed his eyes and was out in seconds.”

Hermione looked disgusted. “That’s terrible! How can anyone just drop off to sleep like that?”

Harry pointed at Ron causing Ginny to laugh. “Ron can drop off to sleep like that.”

Ginny nodded. “And he sleeps like the dead.”

Hermione shrugged. “Oh.”

Harry grinned. “So, I meant to ask you guys yesterday but I forgot. How was Egypt?”

Ron grinned. “Brilliant, mate! You should see some of the curses and things that they’ve got there. They have certain pyramids for muggles to see and then certain pyramids that are hidden and strictly for the wizarding world. The ones that are hidden have things inside of them that would be too far-fetched for muggles to believe in. Like this one guy, he was completely mutated. He had two heads and one of them was cracked down the middle, his left arm sprouted eight fingers and he had three testicles, a crazy eye, and was still bleeding! This guy has been dead for over a thousand years, yet he’s still bleeding! It was wicked! Bill said that it was an old curse one that never dried out the blood or something so you constantly experience the pain of

bleeding out and of your injuries. I mean, this guy is dead, but the injuries are still working. It was creepy, but really neat at the same time.” Ron explained. “Fred and George tried to lock Percy in a tomb but Mum found out. The git! He’s Head Boy you know? Blamed me because he almost lost his badge. Fred and George stole it. They fixed it up so it says Big Head Boy, though I don’t think he’s noticed yet.”

Harry laughed. “Those two like to pick on him, eh?”

Ginny shrugged. “They like to pick on everybody, Percy is just the easiest to annoy.”

Harry nodded. “So what did you think of Egypt, Ginny?”

Ginny smiled warmly at Harry. She still wasn’t sure if she had dreamed the entire conversation in the *Leaky Cauldron* or not. He had not only befriended her, but also wanted her to know that if she ever needed someone to talk to that he was there for her. She wasn’t sure if she was embarrassed by this or what. She didn’t have a crush on Harry anymore. She had realized how dumb she had been acting around him, and how immature towards the end of the school year. But then everything had happened with Tom. She had been mortally embarrassed to have Harry save her life down in the Chamber. But he was acting like he didn’t blame her, the way she thought he would. She had almost gotten him killed but Harry seemed hell-bent on making sure that she understood that it wasn’t her fault and that he didn’t blame her in the least. She respected him more for going out of his way to be nice to her, even after she had screwed up so royally the year before.

She remembered lying in the hospital wing at Hogwarts with Bill sitting next to her, holding a pretty emerald green velvet covered diary in his hands. Bill had insisted that she take it. He had told her that it would be good to write things down. Not only would it be good for her emotionally but it would also help her get over her fear of the diary that she had become possessed by. Bill had asked her that day if she still had a crush on Harry. She remembered shaking her head and then bursting into tears, holding her brother tightly as he cradled her in his lap. She had told him how stupid she had been and all

about her crush on Harry. Then she had told him how mortifying it had been to have him rescue her afterwards. She had only wanted him to be her friend, which was why she had actually worked up enough guts to tell both Ron and Harry what had happened but then Percy had shown up and she had lost her nerve. Now she felt like she owed Harry a life debt, which she did, but she knew that he would never accept it. He simply looked at it as a choice that he made and that was it.

And okay, she didn't have a crush on the Boy Who Lived anymore. She understood that Harry was not the person that she had fallen in love with in her dreams over the stories that her father had told her. She understood that he was a kind and noble person who looked out for his friends and others above himself. She also knew that her crush had been a silly little girl's fantasy. Something she knew that she couldn't indulge in anymore. Tom had taken that innocence away from her. But she still found Harry to be incredibly cute and handsome and she still loved his eyes. But she wanted to be his friend, not a lost little puppy that followed him around looking for scraps, which is how she viewed herself the year before. So when Harry turned to her and asked her what she thought of Egypt, she could only smile warmly because it hadn't been a dream, he did want to help her and she knew that it wasn't out of pity, it was out of friendship.

Her family, everyone except Bill, they all looked at her in pity. They didn't understand what had happened. They didn't understand why she wasn't the same, why she couldn't bounce back. They all wanted to know why she was different. But Harry understood and so did Bill. Bill had always understood her mood, and he had sat and listened to her that day in the hospital.

*"Oh Bill, it was me! It was all me! I wrote in that diary and I believed everything that Tom told me! I was setting that monster on the students and I almost got Harry killed!" She cried out.*

*Bill had scooped her up into his arms and had cradled her in his lap, the way he had when she was younger. "Bullshit, Firefly."*

That one word had told Ginny wonders. Suddenly Bill understood that

Ginny was no longer a child. If he could swear in front of her, something that he had always been very careful never to do, then he truly understood that she wasn't an innocent little girl anymore.

*"You've been through hell, Gin. I know it. Mum and Dad don't understand, and you know what, they might never understand. But I've learned a lot working in Egypt. And I can only imagine the horrors that you went through with You-Know-Who. You shared a soul with him, Firefly. The only person who is ever truly going to understand what you went through is Harry. He's not going to blame you for what happened because he'll understand. He's faced You-Know-Who three times in his life, and he's only twelve years old. But you have that same look in your eye that he does, that look that tells me that you were forced to grow up a hell of a lot faster than necessary. What did you see, Firefly? What kind of terrible things did he show you?" Bill asked carefully as he placed a kiss on her brow.*

*Ginny sniffed. "Terrible things, Bill. Curses and death and sexual ... stuff. He said that ... for the basilisk to kill me he needed to smell the blood of an innocent."*

*Bill nodded; paling. "He didn't ... I mean, it was only an image, so he couldn't ... rape ... you?"*

*Ginny shook her head. "No, he didn't, at least not physically. But mentally, that's exactly what it was, Bill!"*

*Bill held her closer. "Sweetheart, I'm here for you, okay. If you need to talk ever, you just send me an owl. You know that I'm your number one pen pal."*

*She nodded and snuggled closer into his embrace. "Okay."*

*"Ginny, I think that you should talk to Harry too. Maybe try to befriend him because I think that it would be good for you to have someone to talk to about the Chamber, and about what you went through?" When she didn't answer he tipped her chin up so that he could look into her eyes. "You're okay around him now, right? No more silly crush?"*

*She shook her head. "No, no more silly crush. I'm just afraid to talk to*

*him. What if he does blame me for what happened?"*

*Bill pulled her close for a warm hug. "Then I'll beat him up for you."*

*She laughed as he lay her back down on the bed. "I don't think that will be necessary."*

*He grinned and leaned down to kiss her forehead. "I'll stay here with you all night. But go to sleep now and take this sleeping draught. Madam Pomfrey says it won't give you bad dreams."*

*She nodded and let him help her drink it and then she had fallen into a night of a dreamless sleep ... the only night that she hadn't dreamed of the Chamber since it had happened.*

Ginny turned her attention back to Harry, realizing that he had asked her a question, and then she had wandered away mentally. "What, sorry?"

He grinned. "Have a nice trip?"

Ginny laughed. "I was thinking about something that Bill told me this summer."

Ron rolled his eyes. "Ginny and Bill were attached at the hip this summer."

Ginny shrugged. "Yeah well, Egypt was fun. Mum babied me a lot, didn't want me to go inside half of the pyramids. She was afraid that I would have nightmares."

"Well, you did have nightmares, didn't you? I heard you crying in your sleep most of the summer." Ron replied. "Why are you in here with us anyway? Why don't you go sit with your own friends?"

Tears welled up in Ginny's eyes before she could stop them, and she stood up and angrily stormed out of the compartment.

"Ron, what the hell did you do that for?" Harry demanded angrily as Remus snored loudly next to him.

“What do you mean? She never hangs out with us, and suddenly she’s here.” Ron replied bitterly. “I don’t want my baby sister hanging around.”

Harry gave Ron a dirty look. “Look, I have something important to tell you guys. But first, I’m going to go see if Ginny is alright.”

He left the compartment and he found Ginny five minutes later. She was sitting in the baggage compartment, on somebody’s trunk as she furiously wiped tears from her eyes.

“Ginny?” Harry asked.

She looked up at him in surprise. “Harry, what are you doing here?”

He sat down next to her and draped an arm around her shoulder. “Listen, don’t worry about Ron. He doesn’t understand. And I know why you felt frustrated by your mum babying you. What Voldemort does is he steals the innocence from you. I know it and you know it which is why what they saw in those tombs will never compare. And I know the nightmares you had weren’t about Egypt but about the Chamber. I have them too.”

“Why are you doing this? Why are you being so nice to me and trying to get me to open up?” Ginny asked, tears pouring down her cheeks before she could stop them.

Harry wasn’t sure what to do now that she was actually crying. So he did what came naturally, he pulled her close and cradled her head against his chest. “Because I know what it feels like to be attacked by him. I don’t remember much about when he killed my mum, but I know that I dream about laughter and a lot of green light. Then I met him when I was eleven, he was part of Quirrell’s head and I have nightmares with that in there. And now I have the Chamber added in. I know what those dreams are like, Ginny, and I know how scary and how real they can be. I’m the only other person you know who experienced something similar. I just want you to know that I’m here to help you. And I don’t know about you, but being involved in a life or death situation like that, I think it kind of brings people together. I’d



like to be your friend, if you'll let me."

She smiled up at him then, wiping the tears from her eyes. "I'll let you. Thank you, Harry. I'm sorry I cried all over you. I got your shirt wet."

He grinned. "Hey, that's what friends are for!"

She laughed. "Yeah, I guess so. I don't usually cry. I hate to cry!"

He grinned. "Well, don't cry then."

She laughed again as she wiped the remaining tears from her eyes. "I'm working on it!"

He laughed. "Are you coming back to the compartment?"

She shook her head. "No, Ron doesn't want me there. Maybe I'll stop in later on, but for now I'm going to go find some of my friends."

He nodded. "Okay. I'll see you later."

She nodded and watched him walk away. She wondered if he realized that he had just helped heal a little piece of her heart.

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Harry stepped back into the compartment and Ron jumped up. "What's the deal, mate? Running off to find out if Ginny's okay! She's fine!"

Harry sat down and glared at Ron. "For your information, she wasn't fine! She went through a lot last June, Ron! You were really worried about her, I remember! But I'm also one of the only people that can be there for her when she needs to talk! Those nightmares she had were not about tombs in Egypt! They were probably worse than the ones I've been having! She shared her soul with Voldemort! Now she has to live with that! She's not an innocent little girl anymore! She knows more about life than either one of you put together! And I offered to be her friend and her confidant because yes, I saved her life, and yes, that brings people together, but also because I'm the

only person who can really understand! Alright?”

Tears poured down Hermione’s cheeks as she nodded. “Harry, do you have any idea how wonderful you’ve probably made Ginny feel by doing that?”

Ron shrugged. “I’m sorry, mate, I know your right. But Ginny has a crush on you.”

Harry shook his head. “No she doesn’t. She got over that some time last year. We’re just friends okay? And yes Hermione, I do know that I’ve made Ginny feel better, as that was my intention.”

His friends nodded.

“Alright, now I have something important to tell you guys. But you have to promise not to tell anyone okay?”

They nodded.

Harry sighed. “Okay, did you see the newspaper a little while ago with that article about Sirius Black?”

Ron nodded. “Yeah, he escaped from Azkaban prison! The entire Ministry is in an uproar, no one’s ever escaped before.”

“Someone escaped from prison?” Hermione asked in surprise. “How did he get out? Why did he escape?”

Ron shrugged. “That’s the mystery, see. No one understands how he got out. Azkaban is guarded by Dementors and no one can get past them.”

Harry nodded. “I don’t know how he escaped, but I think I know why he escaped.”

“Why?” Hermione asked.

Harry turned to Ron. “Ron, did you read the article about what Sirius Black did to go to Azkaban?”

Ron nodded. "Yeah, he killed some dude and I guess the only piece they found left of him was his finger. Dad says that they sent his finger in a matchbox back to his mother because that was the only thing that she could bury. He killed thirteen muggles too, who happened to be in the way, and all with one curse."

"My God!" Hermione exclaimed. "When did this happen?"

"Twelve years ago." Harry replied. "Sirius Black was Uncle Remus and my Da's best mate."

Ron's mouth dropped open in horror. "No way! And he turned out to be a murderer!"

"Worse," Harry said. "The man that he killed, Peter Pettigrew, was my Da's other best mate. The four of them were inseparable in school. Apparently, when my parents found out that Voldemort wanted to kill me they decided to use the Fidelius Charm."

"What's the Fidelius Charm?" Hermione asked. "I've never heard of it."

"I have." Ron said softly. "It's very advanced magic. It's when you place a charm on a certain person allowing them to guard an important secret. No one can discover that secret unless that person tells them."

Harry nodded. "Exactly. Well my Da asked Sirius Black to be Secret Keeper. They were best mates. Black was even best man at my parents wedding. Well, my Da says that at the last minute, Black convinced him to change Secret Keeper to Peter. He said that Voldemort would never think of them choosing such a weak wizard, as Peter wasn't very good at magic, and was a little weak. Da thought that it was a good plan because it was natural that Voldemort would go after Black, and since he wouldn't actually be the Secret Keeper it would throw them off the trail. Well, it turned out that Black was secretly working for Voldemort. He had been passing information back and forth for years. I guess on the night that Voldemort attacked, Black led Voldemort to Peter because he knew that under torture,

Peter would give the secret away. My Da didn't believe it at first, nor did Uncle Remus, but the evidence was against him. Black had betrayed my parents. Then, when my Da was in the hospital taking care of my mum, Black went after Peter. I guess he blamed him for Voldemort's downfall and for finally revealing his true colours. I guess witnesses say that Peter screamed at Black. He wanted to know how he could have betrayed my parents. Then Black killed him, in the middle of a crowded street, and thirteen muggles along with him. They say he stood in the middle of the street afterwards and just laughed. He was sent to Azkaban right away."

"Wow," Ron replied, leaning back in his seat. "I didn't know about that part. So, Professor Lupin here and your Da must be really pissed that he escaped?"

Harry nodded. "They are. Da says that Black doesn't even know that he's still alive. By the time that Black went to Azkaban, he believed Da and Mum to both be dead. But there's something else."

"What more could their possibly be?" Hermione asked.

Harry gulped. "Well, apparently before he escaped he kept muttering, 'he's at Hogwarts' over and over again in his sleep. Fudge and the Dementors say so. Well, Uncle Moony and Da, think that he escaped to try to kill me."

"Kill you!" Ron exclaimed. "You've got to be bloody joking!"

Harry shook his head. "No, I'm not. Da says that according to Fudge, Black has this far-fetched idea that by killing me it will bring Voldemort back."

"That's ridiculous!" Hermione replied. "It wouldn't bring him back!"

Harry shrugged. "No, but that's what he thinks. Which is why I've been under house arrest all summer, and Da wouldn't let me go visit you, he was afraid for me to go outside."

Ron nodded. "That makes sense. You can go to Hogsmeade though right?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, at first he said no. He's really worried, but I convinced him to let me go. I mean, it's not like I'll be alone, right?"

"But something could still happen," Hermione protested. "I mean, he killed thirteen innocent muggles!"

"Yeah, but I don't think he'd attack a bunch of kids. Da doesn't think so either. And I think he feels safer with Uncle Moony working here."

Hermione nodded. "That makes sense."

"Yeah I – hey who turned out all the lights!" Ron yelled.

The train had suddenly gone pitch black as thunder rolled across the sky outside. Lightning flashed and the compartment door opened.

"Ouch! Who's there?"

"It's me, Ron!" Ginny's voice replied.

"Ow, I'm sitting here," Hermione squeaked.

"Sorry," Neville replied.

Harry felt someone sit down next to him. "Who's there?"

"Ginny."

"Why did all the lights go out?" Neville asked. "We can't be arriving yet?"

"And it's so cold," Hermione whispered. "Where did all the heat go?"

"Be quiet!" Remus' voice hissed through the room.

Then the compartment door was opening and a creature unlike anything that Harry had ever seen before stood there. It was in a black cloak-like robe with a hood. Wispy arms and a cold scaly hand. Then suddenly he was ripped from that scene and he heard a woman

scream his name. Then, there was a flash of green light and laughter before everything went black around him.

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“Harry! Harry!”

He opened his eyes and saw Ginny and Hermione on either side of him. Ron was looking down at him from where he stood.

“Who screamed?” He murmured as he tried to sit up.

Ginny helped him to his feet. She was still trembling. “No one screamed, Harry.”

He looked around. “But I heard ... what happened? What was that thing?”

“Dementor.” Remus replied as he began to break up a huge chocolate bar and hand pieces out to everyone. “They were looking for Sirius Black. They bring up the worse memories you have and make you feel like —”

“You’ll never be happy again.” Ginny whispered as she wrapped her arms tightly around herself.

Remus nodded. “Exactly. Eat this chocolate it will make you feel better. I’m going to go talk to the conductor.”

Harry took a bite of the chocolate and looked around at his friends. “What happened?”

“Well, that Dementor came to the door and you started sort of convulsing in your seat. Then Professor Lupin stood up and made this huge white misty orb thing come out of his wand at the Dementor.” Ron explained.

Hermione nodded. “He said that none of us had Sirius Black hiding under our cloaks, and that it was to leave. You sort of, passed out.”

Harry's cheeks heated in embarrassment. "Well, did anyone else pass out?"

"I almost did." Ginny whispered.

Harry nodded. But he didn't say anything else. Why did only he pass out and not anyone else? Did that make him weaker? Ginny had said that she almost had, but that wasn't the same and he didn't want to sound sexist, but ... she was a girl. He finished off his bit of chocolate just as Remus came back into the room.

"The conductor says that we should be arriving at Hogwarts in about fifteen minutes. Why don't you guys get changed?"

They all nodded, but Harry couldn't help but feel like something was wrong with him. After all, why would only he be affected that way?

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## Chapter 11: Back to Hogwarts

**Author's Notes:** please review!! - side note - i couldnt find out who the prof was for ancient runes so Alexis O'Bryan is my own creation - k? i have big plans for her:D newly edited

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## Chapter XI – Back to Hogwarts

When Harry stepped into the Great Hall he was furiously embarrassed. He had been stopped by Professor McGonagall, and told to go to the hospital wing because word had been sent that he had passed out on the train. And if that wasn't bad enough, Malfoy had found out, and was busy making fainting motions from the Slytherin table.

Harry slid into his seat at the Gryffindor table, where his friends were already eating. He had missed the sorting again. He helped himself to some of the food on the table, but he wasn't really in the mood to eat

it. His mood only soured more when he realized that Ron and Hermione were again arguing over Hermione's new cat, Crookshanks. Apparently, the cat had attacked Scabbers again and Ron was not pleased.

Finally, Dumbledore stood up to talk. "Everyone, I trust that you all had a good summer this year. Good, good. Now first off, I have a very serious thing to discuss with you, Sirius Black, no pun intended of course. Black has escaped from Azkaban prison, and the Dementors of Azkaban are here on the Minister's orders to guard the castle. Please be warned. The Dementors are not trained to not touch the innocent. They cannot be fooled by invisibility cloaks or by any other way. Students are not allowed outside of the castle after dark. The Dementors will be guarding every entrance. This is extremely important. Now on a happier note, we have three new additions to the staff this year. Firstly, Professor Remus Lupin will be taking over the post of Defence Against the Dark Arts, from where Professor Lockhart left off." The hall clapped loudly as Remus stood up to wave before Dumbledore continued. "Secondly, Professor Langlois, our Ancient Runes teacher has decided to retire as he wants to travel the world. So I would like to introduce our new Ancient Runes teacher, Professor Alexis O'Bryan." The hall clapped loudly again as they looked up at the new professor. O'Bryan was very pretty. She had long blonde hair and soft green eyes. She looked like she was only in her late twenties and was definitely the youngest professor, other than Lupin and Snape, on staff. "And thirdly, Professor Kettleburn our Care of Magical Creatures teacher has decided to retire as he wants to spend some more time with his remaining limbs. In his place, I would like to welcome, Professor Rubeus Hagrid."

Harry grinned. "No way!" Then he laughed. "We should have known! Who else would send us a biting book?!"

Ron grinned and yelled out. "Brilliant, Hagrid!"

Once the clapping had died down, Dumbledore dismissed them, and the hall began to empty out. Ron, Hermione, and Harry headed over towards Hagrid.

"Congratulations, Hagrid!" Hermione exclaimed. "You must be really



pleased!"

Hagrid grinned as he blushed furiously. "Well, it wouldn't have happened if it wasn't thanks to you three. You cleared my name last year and now Dumbledore's giving me a chance. It's more than I ever could have hoped for."

Harry grinned. "He's not giving you a chance, Hagrid. Dumbledore knows your perfect for the job!"

A hand landed on Harry's shoulder and he turned around to see Remus there. "Hey Uncle Moo – I mean, Professor Lupin."

Remus laughed. "Try to remember that it's Professor, Harry, at least in class." When Harry grinned at him he turned to Hagrid. "I just wanted to extend my congratulations, as well. I had no idea that you were going to be teaching, too. Good thing to know that I'll have at least one friend on staff."

"Snape," Harry said quietly.

Remus nodded. "Well, I guess that I can't please everyone. But he will be helping me with my ... illness, so I guess that's good enough. Why don't you three head on up to bed now. It's getting late and I know that classes start early in the morning."

"Goodnight, Professor Lupin, Professor Hagrid."

Hagrid grinned sheepishly. "Goodnight."

Harry followed Ron and Hermione up to Gryffindor tower, grinning. This term was going to be fun.

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*Dear Da,*

*This term is going to be much better, I know it! Though, I did have a bit of a rough start. You see, a Dementor came onto the train looking for Sirius Black, but when he came into our compartment, I heard a*

woman scream my name and I saw a lot of green light. My old nightmare now has started to reoccur itself a bit, but it now has the scream in it. I passed out, too. When I woke up, I found that no one else heard the scream. Uncle Remus gave us all chocolate. Now, Draco Malfoy has been going about all day, constantly mocking me, and making sure to speak loud and clear when he imitates the idea of me passing out. It's really annoying. Hermione keeps telling me to ignore him, but it's hard, and I just desperately want to smack him.

I've become pretty good friends with Ginny this year. Well, at least I think I have. I talked to her a bit and I explained to her that if she ever needed someone to talk to, about what happened in June, that I am here for her. I think that both of us will benefit from talking to each other, as we both can understand each other in a way that no one else can. Only because we were both touched by Voldemort and survived. Not that I think this is anything to brag about, but I think that you get my point.

On a happier note – guess who the new Care of Magical Creatures teacher is – Hagrid! No wonder he sent me a biting book! And guess how we open the book – stroke the spine! Doesn't it just figure that Hagrid would have something like that? His first class was really awesome too. He showed us Hippogriffs. But Malfoy had to go and ruin his first class. Hagrid specifically said that Hippogriffs are very proud creatures, and that you can't insult them because they will attack. Well, Malfoy walked right over to one and called it stupid. It attacked him, scratched his arm. Now, Hagrid is terrified that he's going to get fired. We went to go talk to him but all he did was yell at us for being outside after dark.

We had Divination first, with Professor Trelawney. She's a bit of a whacko! She's got these huge glasses that make her look like an insect, and she's wears these frilly shawls. She scared the crap out of us all on the first day, though – told me that I was going to die. Then when we got to Transfiguration, Professor McGonagall told me not to worry about it, and that Sybil Trelawney predicts the death of one student every year. I guess it's the way that she likes to start her class. Lucky me.

Ancient Runes is very interesting. I'm enjoying it a lot, more than I

*thought I would. Professor O'Bryan is pretty brilliant. She knows a lot about everything. She's new this year too and really pretty. A lot of blokes have a bit of a crush on her – Ron included. He's kicking himself for not taking Runes now. Hermione is in runes with me.*

*Hermione is hiding something from Ron and I, though. According to her timetable she's supposed to be in way too many classes at one time. She's taking Charms, Potions, Transfiguration, Herbology, Care of Magical Creatures, DADA, Divination, Muggle Studies, Ancient Runes, and Arthimency. But that's not possible as Muggle Studies and Arthimency are at the same time as Divination and Ancient Runes. She says it's all fixed up with Professor McGonagall, but I don't know. It's odd.*

*Snape gave us a shrinking solution on the first day – naturally, he made it a hard one and since Malfoy is making his injury out to be more than it is, considering Madam Pomfrey healed it in about two seconds, I had to help him cut up his ingredients. And I just know Snape picked me on purpose! The git!*

*Everything else has been going good, and the whole school has been talking about Uncle Remus' classes. Everyone is saying that he's the best DADA teacher ever. We started off with Boggarts. It was a really good class. Snape insulted Neville though – he picks on Neville just as much as me – telling Uncle Remus that Neville shouldn't be allowed to do anything as he is terrible in everything that he does. So, being Uncle Remus, he asked Neville to go first. He told him to picture the thing he fears most – Snape haha – and then to picture his grandmother's clothes. It was hilarious! Snape came out of the wardrobe dressed in a dress with a vulture hat and carrying a red handbag. Let's just say, Snape is not too pleased with the rumours going across the school. I will treasure that image in my mind forever!*

*There is one thing, and I've been meaning to ask Uncle Remus about it. When we were doing the boggarts, he stopped me from trying it out. Do you know why he would do that? I'll have to ask him later. DADA is definitely everyone's favourite class.*

*Hermione's new cat, Crookshanks, seems to have some serious issue with Scabbers, Ron's rat. He's always trying to attack him. It's*

*driving me batty listening to them arguing all the time! It's even worse than usual!*

*Quidditch started up again – Oliver gave us another long-winded speech. This is his last year, so he desperately wants to win the cup. We told him this year we would do it! So wish us luck!*

*Talk to you later,*

*Love,  
Harry*

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Harry cornered Remus after the next DADA class. The boggart thing was still really bothering him. “May I talk to you for a moment?”

Remus nodded. “Of course, Harry. You’ll have to make it quick though, I’ve got another class coming in.”

Harry nodded. “Well, it’s about the boggart. Why didn’t you let me fight it?”

“Ah, I wondered when you would approach me about that. I didn’t let you fight it, because I was afraid that it would turn into Voldemort. I didn’t want to create a panic among the other students.”

“Oh, I did think of Voldemort at first ... but I’m not as afraid of him as I am of those Dementors.”

Remus grinned. “I am impressed. What you fear most is fear itself. That’s wonderful. I will apologize then.”

Harry grinned. “I just thought maybe you thought I couldn’t do it or something.”

Remus laughed. “Hardly. Did you write to James yet?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, this morning. I told him that I was going to come talk to you about the boggart thing.”

"I wonder if he's lonely."

"I don't think so. He has Maddy and Mickey and Foolish and Potts."

Remus laughed. "That he does. You better run along to your next class, or you're going to be late."

Harry nodded. "Alright, talk to you later."

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dear Harry,**

**I got a letter from Remus explaining the boggart issue, but he told me that you had already resolved it. I had no idea that Hagrid would be teaching and tell him that I said not to get down too much, as he is a professor now. I'm glad your classes are enjoyable and I told you not to take Divination – predicting your death. That can't be fun. Sounds like Ancient Runes might be more fun than I remember – we certainly never had any attractive professors – at least not to my knowledge, but my mind was always on Lily.**

**Moony wanted to know if I was lonely here alone. I'm not, but I do miss you both, naturally, since I'm so used to you being underfoot. But I have work to keep me busy, something that I have definitely have been doing a lot of with Sirius on the loose. I've been thinking constantly about if I should reveal the fact that Sirius is an animagus to King or to the rest of the people in my unit. Remus and I talked about it, but we don't think that we can do it. If I reveal that ... I'll be telling Dumbledore that we betrayed him in school; that Remus broke his promise to stay in the Shrieking Shack; and well Azkaban is the sentence for being an unregistered animagus. I know to look for the dog and I think that's good enough for now because I'm the one in charge of this operation. I just hope that I'm making the right choice.**

**Well, keep me posted on new and entertaining news. I can use it, especially when my mind is so locked on finding Sirius.**

**Love,  
Da**

Harry folded the letter and placed it in his pocket just as Ginny took a seat next to him. "Hello."

Ginny smiled at him. "Hi, letter from your da?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. He's making fun of me for taking Divination. He did warn me that I would be bored, and I told him about how Trelawney has been predicting my death constantly. He thinks it's amusing. So what's up?"

She shrugged as she stretched out slightly on the sofa in the common room. "Not too much, just escaping from Colin. He's driving me crazy!"

Harry grinned. "Colin Creevey? Yeah, he tends to do that. What's he doing?"

Ginny laughed. "Well, he knows that we're friends now so he ... well he sort of wants me to get your autograph."

Harry groaned. "You're kidding right? I thought that he gave up on that last year!"

Ginny shook her head as she laughed. "No, no he didn't."

Harry grinned. "Well, are you ready to head down to the Halloween feast?"

She shrugged. "I'm not really very hungry."

Harry's eyebrow rose as her stomach let out a grumble. Then he remembered what had happened last Halloween. A message written in blood and Mrs. Norris hanging from the rafters; the Chamber had opened. "Come on, I see you here, and you're perfectly normal. Nothing bad is going to happen to you."

She nodded. "I opened the Chamber for the first time on Halloween."

"I know. Come on, let's go down to eat. It will be better for you to face it, alright?"

She gulped and stood up, letting Harry bring her out of the portrait hole. He was right of course, but that didn't mean that she couldn't be scared out of her wits. She took a seat at the table next to him and laughed when he began to pile food on top of her plate. "Harry!"

"What? We're trying to get you to eat here!"

She grinned. "I'm eating. Now, fill up your own plate."

Harry grinned back. As long as she was grinning, he knew that she would be okay.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry laid in his sleeping bag in between Ron and Ginny, Hermione was laying on the other side of Ron. He couldn't believe it! Sirius Black had actually tried to break into the school. The Fat Lady had been slashed to pieces! It was his fault too because Black was after him. But one thing bothered Harry about the entire thing ... why would he go up to the dorms and not into the Hall? After all, that's where everyone was. He fell asleep listening to Percy telling people off, but he hardly felt better for it.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Dear Da,*

*The first Quidditch match of the season was a disaster! The first match I ever lost! And we lost it to Hufflepuff! The Dementors came into the field and they affect me badly, worse then anyone else in the school. I passed out again, and fell off my broom. I woke up in the hospital wing, to find out that Dumbledore had broken my fall with a spell. And I lost my broom – it crashed into the Whomping Willow! But don't worry; I'll get another broom – my own broom. I'll buy it myself. Wood is already showing me catalogues. I'm pretty sure I have*

*enough saved up from my allowance.*

*I heard a woman screaming again, right before I fell off my broom. I think I know what it is now – it's Mum, yelling at Voldemort, begging him not to kill me right before he attacks. Uncle Moony says that I probably pass out because this memory is so terrible, and because I have lived through more bad things than anyone else. I asked him to teach me how to ward off the Dementors. We're going to start after Christmas as he's not feeling too well since it's that certain time of the month.*

*I'm sure you already heard – but Sirius Black broke into the castle. He escaped before anyone caught him, but it still left the castle in a bit of an uproar. Well I'll talk to you later if anything else comes up.*

*Love,  
Harry*

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry stood by sourly as he watched Ron and Hermione get ready to go to Hogsmeade. Ever since Black had broken into the castle he had been watched very closely. Quidditch practices had to be supervised by a professor. He wasn't allowed outside after dark and Dumbledore had banned him from the village of Hogsmeade. He sat on the steps as he watched his friends leave. He didn't think that it was fair for his privileges to be taken away, but he understood why everyone was so worried.

He looked up as Fred and George approached him. "Hey, guys."

Fred grinned. "You look so glum, mate. Doesn't he, George?"

George nodded. "Aye, he does. Why the long face, Potter?"

Harry glared at them. "Please, as if you don't know."

Fred grinned. "Yeah, we understand it, mate, life is tough. Listen, we got a gift for you. We've had it for five long years now, and we don't need it anymore, and we think that your need is greater than ours.



Right, George?”

“Right, Fred. Now come here, Harry. We are about to let you in on the secrets of our success.”

Harry grinned. “Really?”

They nodded.

George unrolled an old piece of parchment carefully and placed it in Harry’s hands. “We owe them everything.” Then he placed a hand over his heart. “Well, what do you think?”

“Er, what is it?”

George grinned. “Well, the story goes like this, Harry. When we were in our first year, young, carefree and innocent –”

Harry snorted. He didn’t think that the twins had ever been innocent.

Fred smirked. “Okay, well more innocent than we are now. Well, we let off some dungbombs in the corridor outside of Filch’s office. He caught us and was not very pleased.”

George nodded. “He did and he was angry. But we couldn’t help but notice that in his filing cabinets he had a drawer marked ‘Confiscated and Highly Dangerous’, so naturally, we were a little curious.”

Harry grinned. “You didn’t?”

Fred nodded. “Aye, we did. We created another diversion with dungbombs and we reached into the drawer and found ... this.”

“We don’t reckon Filch ever figured out how to work it.”

“And what is this?”

George grinned. “This Harry, this is the key to our success.” He pointed his wand at the parchment before reciting, *“I solemnly swear that I am up to no good.”*

Lines and paths began to form across the parchment, telling the story of Hogwarts with all of its teachers and people. And across the top it read: *Moony, Wormtail, Padfoot, and Prongs proudly present, the Marauder's Map.*

Harry grinned. "No way!"

"No way, what?" Fred asked.

Harry laughed. "I've been hoping to stumble across this map since my first year."

"You've known about it?" Fred asked in surprise.

"Yeah. My Da used to tell me stories about the Marauders."

George grinned. "He knew them!"

Harry grinned broadly. "Even better. Moony is a nickname for Uncle Remus a.k.a. Professor Lupin; Wormtail is a nickname for Peter Pettigrew; Padfoot is a nickname for Sirius Black; and Prongs is a nickname for my Da. They created this map when they were in school."

Fred's mouth dropped open in surprise. "Well, then ... how did they do it?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know. But I'm sure if you asked them they'd tell you. Listen, I have to go talk to Uncle Moony about this, I'll see you guys later. Thanks so much." He hurried off towards Remus' office, leaving Fred and George staring after him in surprise.

He knocked on the door and when he heard the come in, he stepped inside. He was surprised to find not only Remus in there, but James as well.

"Da, what are you doing here?"

James grinned. "I came to talk to Dumbledore about you going to

Hogsmeade, and I thought that I'd stop and see Moony, here."

Harry grinned. "About me being allowed to go?"

James nodded. "Yeah. I think that we've come to an understanding. You will be able to go to Hogsmeade as long as Remus goes with you."

Harry grinned. "I can handle that. Thanks. Guess what?"

Remus shrugged. "I don't know, but it must be pretty exciting since you look like you're going to burst."

Harry laughed. "No, well Fred and George ... they stole this from Filch's office in their first year. They said that they found it in a drawer marked 'Confiscated and Highly Dangerous'. They just gave it to me now." He held the parchment out to his father and James' face lit up.

"Our map!"

Remus grinned. "Why am I not surprised to know that those two got their hands on it?"

James laughed. "Brilliant, well, now that you've got it you can start causing some mischief. When you're done looking at it just tap your wand at the map and say '*mischief managed*'."

Remus however was looking solemn. "James, I don't know if Harry should keep that."

"What do you mean, Moony?"

"What if Sirius is using one of those passageways to get in and out of the castle? I don't know if Harry should be exploring on his own."

James sighed. "I never thought of that. What do you suggest?"

Harry looked like Christmas had just been cancelled. "You're not going to let me use it?"

Remus smiled. "I'll let you use it every once in a while, but I want to keep it for a bit, to keep an eye out for Sirius. Alright?"

Harry nodded. He knew that they were right but the thought didn't cheer him up any. "Alright."

"Harry, do you mind staying here for Christmas again? Remus will be here if you need anything. I have to go to Germany for work." James explained.'

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I can stay. Why do you have to go to Germany?"

James shrugged. "Some new training program that they've got running there. It's a two week program of intense training. King is sending half of the department over Christmas and half of the department the first two weeks of summer. I got stuck in the first batch. You don't mind, do you? Because if you don't want to stay here, I might be able to arrange something for you to come with me. Not that it will be very exciting, mind you, but I might be able too."

Harry grinned. "It's alright, Da. I'll be fine here. Have fun with your training."

James snorted. "Yeah right, like that's possible."

Harry laughed at the look on his father's face.

"Oh, Harry, wait. I picked something up for you when I was in muggle London." James replied as he handed his son a plastic bag.

Harry opened the bag and grinned. There were three books in there: *The Shining* by Steven King, *The Chamber* by John Grisham, and *The Doomsday Conspiracy* by Sidney Sheldon. "Thanks, Da, I was running low on novels."

James grinned. "I know you like those three authors, so I just picked some random ones. Why don't you go crack one open?"

Harry grinned. "I will, thanks. See you later and happy Christmas." He

gave James a quick hug before he left the room. He knew Remus, and he knew that Remus wouldn't hold onto the map for very long.

Harry headed into the common room and took a seat in his favourite armchair near the fire before he opened *The Shining*. He figured a good muggle horror story was the way to go at the moment. He had only read the first few pages when he saw Ginny sit down in the chair next to him.

"Hi."

She smiled. "Hi, what are you reading?"

"*The Shining* by Steven King, you?"

She laughed. "Nothing quite as interesting I'm afraid. Charms, chapter eight."

He laughed. "Now that sounds exciting. And as I'm sure I read it last year, it probably isn't."

Ginny grinned and then she turned to Harry with a more serious look on her face. "Harry, I'm going to ask you something, and if you don't think that it's any of my business then tell me. But I've heard lately that Sirius Black escaped prison to come after you."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, it's true. At least that's the rumour anyway. My Da and Uncle Remus are very worried. They think he escaped to try to kill me."

Ginny nodded. "See, that's it. I don't think that he did."

Harry put his book down and glanced at Ginny quizzically. "What do you mean?"

She shrugged and then glanced around to see if anyone was listening. Once she was assured that everyone was too far away to hear she spoke. "Ever since ... what happened in the Chamber, I've been really good at ... judging character."

“Okay, what does that have to do with anything?”

“Well, it’s hard to explain. But I can tell when people are capable of doing something evil and whether they have or not. I think it’s a skill I’ve always had but it seems as if it has intensified since the Chamber. I mean, I’m really good at reading faces and emotions.” She replied. When Harry continued to look at her quizzically she sighed. “Okay, see when I look at Bill I see an absolute innate goodness. At the same time I can see this darker side of him that he is more than capable of using, but only to protect those he loves. When I look at Ron, I see the exact same thing. You, I see again a sense of absolute goodness but also the dark. Yours tells me that you could do something terrible, if it was absolutely necessary, but it would always be your last choice because you have a thorough understanding of right and wrong. Do you get where I’m going with this?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, that makes sense. So, you can see this just by looking at people?”

She nodded. “Yes. Have you ever heard of Legilimency, Harry?”

He shook his head. “No.”

“Well, that’s the ability to read people’s minds. Tom had the quality even as a sixteen-year-old-boy. No, I can’t read people’s minds, if that’s what you’re thinking, but I think maybe some of his ... skills may have stayed with me. Does that make sense?”

“Yeah, it does. Dumbledore told me last year that when Voldemort gave me this scar he might have unintentionally given me some of his powers and his skills, such as the ability to speak Parseltongue.”

Ginny nodded. “I can still speak it.”

“You can?”

“Yeah, I noticed over the summer. I was weeding the vegetable garden for mum and a garden snake was there. I yelled and I heard it say, *‘I wasn’t doing nothing’*. Anyway I ended up asking it to go away and he agreed. Do you think I’ll always have it? Same with this

character thing?" She asked.

Harry nodded. "I think so. But what does all of this have to do with the fact that Sirius Black wants to kill me?"

Ginny sighed. "Alright, when I look at a picture of Sirius Black, do you know what I see?"

Harry shook his head, "A murderer?"

"No, I see a man who is incredibly kind hearted and noble and good. I also see a crushed innocence, a sense of betrayal, for him not against him, and the dark side I see is like yours. It's the same dark that I see in your da, it tells me that you could and would resort to evil if you were protecting those you love, but you wouldn't hurt them intentionally." Ginny explained. "Which is why I don't think that he's trying to kill you."

Harry nodded. "That's some view."

"I know. It's just what I see."

He smiled at her. "Well, he must have escaped for a reason. And since he is hanging around Hogwarts, trying to do something, he must have a reason. Otherwise, I'm sure that he would have gone somewhere warm and exciting. You know, somewhere where he couldn't be caught?"

Ginny nodded. "I think you're right. Come on, let's go get some dinner I just heard your stomach rumble."

Harry laughed. "Alright."

\*\*\*\*\*

*Dear Da,*

*I GOT A FIREBOLT FOR CHRISTMAS!!*

*I don't have it anymore, of course. It was sent anonymously, and*

*Hermione went and told McGonagall, who took it away because she thinks that Hermione is right, that it is from Sirius Black. So now it's being stripped down and checked for jinxes and charms and whatnot. But I don't think anything is wrong with it. It was perfect and beautiful!! Imagine owning a Firebolt! Da it was so nice! Even if it only lasted a minute. McGonagall says that after it's all checked out, and if nothing is wrong with it, I'll get it back!*

*On a sadder note – Hagrid is in a right state. The Committee for the Disposal of Dangerous Creatures is going to have Buckbeak, the Hippogriff, at a hearing for a possible execution. Which is totally wrong because Malfoy provoked it, that's why it attacked him! Ron, Hermione, and I are researching for it. Well, Ron and I are actually not talking to Hermione, at the moment. How could she take that Firebolt away?*

*Well, I told Oliver that I got a Firebolt. He's thrilled and now he's gone to badger McGonagall about when I can have it back.*

*I had my first anti-Dementor lesson with Uncle Moony. It didn't go so well. But he told me not to worry because most grown wizards can't even do it. That doesn't make me feel any better though.*

*Ron and I are still unsure about Hermione's schedule as she's never missed a single class, yet a lot of them are at the same time. It just doesn't make sense and she's not telling.*

*How did the training go? Was it fun? Did you get to sight see around Germany? Well, hope you had a good Christmas.*

*Love,  
Harry*

**Dear Harry,**

**DO NOT BE MAD AT HERMIONE FOR SUCH A STUPID REASON! SHE IS JUST LOOKING OUT FOR YOU! YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO SURPRISED TO THINK THAT THE GIFT MIGHT COME FROM BLACK!! THAT WOULD BE A PRETTY GOOD WAY TO KILL YOU!! NO ONE WOULD EVER SUSPECT IT! YOU APOLOGIZE**



**TO HER, RIGHT AWAY!**

**Now, I'm sorry that your broom got taken away, Harry, but it will be returned when it is jinx-free. The Patronous Charm is a hard thing to do, so don't get discouraged. Moony will have you doing it like a pro soon.**

**The training was boring, just like I said it would be, and lots of hard work. I was exhausted every night by the time I went to bed. I didn't have much time for sight seeing. They allowed us one afternoon, so I only got to see a few things. I picked up some souvenirs for you but I think I might use them as a birthday gift, just to make you wait longer. Haha.**

**Did Moony give you back the map yet? If not, don't worry about it, as soon as Black is caught the map is yours. Then, you can solemnly swear that you're up to no good. I'll talk to you later.**

**Love,  
Da**

**P.S. I'm a little stressed out at the moment over the Sirius thing, so I apologize if I sound harsh in this letter. I love you, and I'll feel so much better once Sirius is caught.**

*Dear Da,*

*Both Ron and I apologized to Hermione. It was wrong of us but we were angry. I got the Firebolt back. Nothing was wrong with it at all. McGonagall says that I've got a good friend out there somewhere. I wonder who could have sent it.*

*Crookshanks ate Scabbers!*

*At least we think so. Ron's bed had ginger cat hair on it and blood and Scabbers is missing! Ron is furious with Hermione. He says that she didn't take him seriously when he told her that her cat was trying to kill his rat. Now they're not talking to each other, again.*

*We had our match against Ravenclaw this afternoon. They have this*

*new seeker, she's a fourth year. Her name is Cho Chang and she's really pretty. She's got long dark black hair and soft grey eyes. She's a pretty good flyer too. I beat her though – she was riding a Comet Two Sixty – like that's a match for a Firebolt! Ha!*

*But, during the game three Dementors appeared, and I was so happy because they didn't affect me at all and I managed a real Patronous! It took the form of a white stag! Remus told me that means that my happiest memories are of you. But then, I found out that it worked because it was Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle dressed up as Dementors. They were trying to sabotage the game for Gryffindor because they figured I'd faint. McGonagall was pissed! They are in a lot of trouble!*

*Then, in the middle of the night last night, Ron woke me up because he screamed. He said Sirius Black was standing over his bed with a knife! No one believed him of course. But then when McGonagall asked Sir Cadogan (the portrait who took over from the Fat Lady) if he let the man in, he said yes. He had all the passwords for the week listed on a piece of paper. Neville had written them all down because Sir Cadogan kept changing them, and he can never remember. Neville's been banned from Hogsmeade the rest of the year!*

*Hagrid heard from the committee as well. Buckbeak is to be executed. He told us not to come down and see him, but we're not going to let him go through that alone. Talk to you later, Da.*

Love,  
Harry

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## **Chapter 12: Discovering the Truth**

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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## **Chapter XII – Discovering the Truth**

Harry, Ron and Hermione headed down to Hagrid's cabin after Harry sent Hedwig out with his letter. They were really worried about how this was going to affect Hagrid, as they remembered how much pain he had been in when Buckbeak had had to go to the hearing, let alone being executed. They were carefully concealed under Harry's invisibility cloak so they had to walk slowly so as to make sure that none of them were showing. Since it was still day light when they left the castle, they didn't have to worry about the Dementor guards, but to be honest, the Dementors were the last thing on their minds.

They knocked softly on the hut door and Hagrid opened it up. Harry pushed the cloak back as they looked up at him. "Where's Buckbeak, Hagrid?"

Hagrid pointed to where the Hippogriff was tied up in the vegetable patch. "O'er there. I've tried to make him comfortable all day. You shouldn't 'ave come."

Hermione took Hagrid's hand in hers. "Don't be ridiculous, Hagrid; you shouldn't have to go through something like this by yourself. We want to be here for you."

Ron nodded. "That's what friends are for."

Harry walked over to Hagrid and was surprised when he was pulled into his arms for a tight hug, hard enough to knock the circulation out of his system. "We care about you, Hagrid."

Hermione nodded. "Let me make you a cup of tea. It will soothe your throat a bit and maybe help calm you down."

Hagrid nodded as he watched Hermione open his cupboards. "I appreciate you three coming down to see me, but I don't want you to watch Buckbeak ... that's not something you should be seeing." Hagrid replied, as silent tears rolled down his cheek.

"But Hagrid, we want –"

"I said no! I don't want you to witness that!"

Hermione shrieked causing the three of them to turn to look at her.  
“Ron! I just ... I found Scabbers!”

“What?”

“Scabbers!” Hermione repeated as she pointed at the rat who was trying to escape.

Ron reached forward and grabbed him. “Come here, you. Don’t worry, that ruddy cat is no where around!”

“Ron! I think that this means that you owe me an apology!” Hermione demanded.

“What do you mean?”

Hermione huffed. “I mean, you blamed me for Scabbers disappearance, saying that Crookshanks ate him! Yet here he is, alive and well.”

“Well, the evidence was against him and –”

“Shush! You three have to go! Dumbledore’s coming down with Fudge and with the executioner. I think his name is Macnair! You guys can’t be seen ‘ere! Go out the back, ‘urry! Cover yourselves up in this cloak!” Hagrid exclaimed as he cautiously watched out of the corner of his eye at the approaching trio.

“Hagrid,” Harry began. “We want to –”

“Out!” Hagrid demanded.

Harry threw the cloak over them as they headed out the back exit and began to make their way back up the hill to the castle. He could feel Ron squirming around next to him. “Ron stop moving, the cloak won’t stay on all of us!”

“I – can’t – bloody – help it – he won’t stay – still – ouch! Bloody hell – he bit me!”

Harry saw Scabbers hit the ground and before he could stop Ron, he had thrown off the cloak and chased after him. Harry looked over at Hermione who nodded and they both dived out from under the cloak and hurried after Ron. Scabbers continued to escape. Harry then saw a familiar shadow step out of the woods, Crookshanks. He elbowed Hermione and pointed.

Hermione shook her head. "Crookshanks, no ... come here."

If the cat heard Hermione he gave no sign. Instead, he very carefully tip-toed to Ron, who had managed to grab Scabbers, but the rat was still trying to escape Ron's hands.

Then, out of no where, this huge, scruffy, black dog that Harry remembered seeing in Diagon Alley came busting out of the woods and wrapped his jaws around Ron's left leg. Ron screamed as the dog dragged him into a hole beneath the Whomping Willow, with Crookshanks watching.

"RON!" Hermione screamed. She wrapped her hands around Harry's arm tightly. "Harry, what do we do? How do we get under that tree?"

Harry only pointed. Crookshanks carefully wiggled under the tree on his belly and pressed a knot with its paw and the waving branches stopped. Harry and Hermione ran for it, diving into the hole as the branches swung around them again, just missing them.

Harry stood up and carefully dusted himself off. "Are you okay, Hermione?"

She nodded as she stood up. "Where are we?"

"In a tunnel, leading to the Shrieking Shack. My Da told me about it last year when Ron and I crashed that car into the tree." Harry explained.

Hermione nodded. She reached over and held Harry's hand tightly. "Why would that dog grab Ron like that?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know. Come on, let's go find out."

They followed the tunnel carefully and quietly, lighting their wands for easier progress. They ended up in a dark cellar with some broken stairs. Hermione gasped when she saw them.

“Harry, there’s no way we can go up those stairs! They look much too dangerous!!”

Harry sighed. “Hermione, that’s the only way up. Now come on!”

He pulled her along as he went up the stairs, the floors creaking around them. Boards and tables and other pieces of furniture were completely ruined or broken. Harry knew that Remus had probably done all of it. Finally they could hear Ron’s quiet moaning, or not so quiet, as it was Ron. They stepped into the room and Ron shook his head desperately.

“Harry, no! It’s a trap! He’s an animagus!”

The door closed behind them and Harry could have cursed himself for being so stupid! Hadn’t his Da told him stories about their transformations to help Remus? Sirius Black had always been a rough scruffy black dog. Harry pulled his wand out and pointed it at Black.

“You let him go, or I’ll kill you.”

Black looked at the wand carefully and then he eyed Harry. “I grabbed your friend because I knew that you would come in after him. Or at least I was hoping you would have some noble qualities like James did.”

“Don’t you talk about him!” Harry demanded. “It’s me you want, now let them go!”

Black shook his head. “No. I spent twelve years in prison for a crime that I never committed. There is no way that I am going to let him go now.”

“Let who go?” Harry asked. “It’s me you want!”

“Him!” Black yelled, pointing towards the bed where Ron lay clutching Scabbers, his leg bent at an odd angle.

“Me?” Ron exclaimed. “You’re mental!”

“Not you, boy, the rat!”

Ron looked bewildered. “Scabbers! Why on earth would you want him? Scabbers stay still!” Ron hissed as the rat frantically tried to escape from his grasp.

“I want him, because it’s because of him, that I’ve been in prison! And I want to commit the crime that I was imprisoned for!”

Harry continued to point his wand at Black. “I know why you went to prison! You betrayed my parents! And then you killed Pettigrew! And now you want to kill me!”

Harry dived at Black, using the training that he remembered from his childhood he fought back. A fist to the gut, an open palm across the face, an elbow to the rib, a leg jab to his knees; Black barely had time to yelp when Harry attacked him.

“Harry! Get off me! You don’t understand what happened!”

Tears were welled up in Harry’s eyes now. “Yes, I do!” He continued to pummel his fists into Black’s face blindly as Black tried to hold his arms back.

Suddenly, the door burst open and Harry found himself flying off of Black and landing a few feet away. He looked up to see Remus in the doorway and to his horror he was helping Black to his feet and embracing him like an old friend.

“Uncle Moony!”

Remus turned to Harry. “Harry, Sirius ... he’s innocent. Don’t you see? We were wrong all these years! We have proof in this room.”

Harry stared at his honorary uncle in shock. "But Da ... Uncle Moony ...?"

Hermione was staring at Remus in shock. "No! I trusted you! I didn't tell anyone when I found out!"

"What's that, Hermione?"

Hermione gulped and then pointed her finger at Remus. "He's a werewolf!"

Ron yelled. "Stay away from me!"

Remus nodded, but he ignored Ron and continued to use his wand to bind up his leg. "I am. How long have you known?"

"Since Snape assigned the essay."

Remus smiled. "You are the brightest witch of your age, isn't she, Harry?"

Harry shrugged. "That's not important, Uncle Remus. How did you know we were here?"

"The map. I had a feeling that you three would go to visit Hagrid tonight so I just wanted to make sure that you got back to the castle alright. But as you were leaving Hagrid's cabin I noticed that four of you came out."

"Four? But there were only three of us." Harry replied.

Remus shook his head. "No, there were four of you."

"Who was the fourth person?" Harry asked.

Black spoke this time. "Peter Pettigrew!"

Harry shook his head. "That's impossible! You killed him!"

Black shook his head this time, grinning. "Oh no, I didn't kill him, but



that was my intent when I cornered him on that street!”

Remus turned to look at Black now. “Padfoot, what happened that night?”

“Well, to start it off, I had convinced Prongs to change Secret Keeper to Peter, I thought: *well no one would ever suspect a stupid rat like him*. The charm was performed and –”

“And you led Voldemort to Peter who squealed! You betrayed my parents!” Harry yelled.

“No I didn’t,” he replied, his voice hoarse. “I loved them, and you, more than anything else in the world. That night I went to check on Peter but he was gone. There was no sign of a struggle, so I was a little worried. I waited around for him about twenty minutes. When he didn’t return I set out for Godric’s Hollow. The house was destroyed when I got there. I stumbled into the house as Hagrid was coming down the stairs, Harry in his arms. Hagrid was crying and James was ... he was lying on the floor in the living room bleeding. I ran over to him, shaking him but Hagrid pulled me away, told me he was dead and that so was Lily. Harry, you ... you were calling for me. So I took you out of Hagrid’s arms. You called out for your mum and da and I told you no and you got upset. Hagrid told me that Dumbledore had orders to take you to your aunt and uncle’s house. I told him that I was your godfather and that I would take care of you. But he had orders from Dumbledore to take you to your muggle relatives. So I gave him my bike and I set out looking for Peter. I found him in a pub twenty blocks away. He saw me and he ran. I chased him down to the street. I asked him how he could have betrayed James and Lily and then he started screaming. He yelled out to the entire street that I had betrayed my best friends and that I had killed them. Then before I could so much as curse him he cut off his own finger with such a destructive spell that it backfired, killing the surrounding people in the process and he transformed into a rat and ran into the sewer.”

Remus nodded; paling considerably. “He never died?”

Black shook his head, “No, he faked his own death.”

“Um ... Mr. Black?” Hermione asked, making him jump. “How exactly did you find out where this rat was and how did you know that it was Pettigrew?”

“That is a good question.” Remus replied. “Sirius, how did you know?”

“The newspaper. Fudge came in to see me one day and I asked him for the crossword. On the other side it showed this red-headed family and Peter was sitting on that boy’s shoulder. I must have seen him transform a dozen times! And besides, he was missing a toe.”

Harry gulped. “And the only thing they found of him was his —”

“Finger. The bastard cut it off himself!” Black exclaimed.

Harry turned to look at Ron then. “No, this is just Scabbers, he’s my rat. He’s been in my family for a long time. He used to belong to my brother Percy.”

“Twelve years to be exact? Hell of a long life for a common garden rat! Smart of him to move in with a wizarding family, keeping his ear to ground. He must be hiding from something to live twelve years as a rat!” Black demanded.

Ron gulped. “We’ve just been taking good care of him. This is Scabbers, not Peter.”

“He doesn’t look too good now, does he?”

Harry nodded. “Ron! You said that Scabbers started to look sickly right around the time that Hermione bought Crookshanks, but that’s not true it was before, when it was heard that Sirius escaped from Azkaban.”

The door to the shack burst open again. This time it was Snape. “Well, well, well, what do we have here?”

“Professor, you don’t understand we —”

“Hush, Potter, you’re already in enough trouble as it is!” Snape

snapped. "I knew it was you letting Black into the castle, Lupin, I tried to warn Dumbledore but he didn't believe me."

Remus held his hand up. "Severus, it's a misunderstanding. How did you find us here?"

"I went to your office, Remus, to give you your potion for the evening. I noticed this map on your desk and I happened to see who was there."

Snape pointed his wand at Remus but before he could do anything Harry, Hermione, and Ron all used the expelliarmus charm on him, causing him to fly back and hit the wall, knocking him unconscious.

Hermione gulped. "Oh my God, we just hit a teacher!"

Harry pointed his wand at Black now. "Prove to me that that's Wormtail."

Black nodded. He stalked over to Ron. "Give me Peter."

"His name is not Peter, it's Scabbers!"

Black ripped the rat from Ron's grasp. He began to squirm madly. "Shall we do it together, Moony?"

Remus nodded. They both pointed their wands at the rat and in a flash of yellow light, a chubby man who was slightly balding and rather resembled the rat he had just been stood before them.

"Peter, how nice to see you again." Remus replied.

Peter Pettigrew looked up at them carefully. "Remus, Sirius, my old friends."

Black laughed. "Friends, Peter? That is something you don't have, or you wouldn't be living twelve years as a rat!"

Peter pointed at Black now. "Remus, he was trying to kill me!"

Remus shrugged. "Peter, I find that very hard to believe. Why would you spend twelve years hiding from Sirius? He's been in jail."

"But I knew that he would come after me!"

Remus' eyebrow rose slightly. "You knew that he was going to escape? When no one else had ever done it before?"

Peter nodded. "He knows dark magic, learned it straight from You-Know-Who."

"Voldemort!" Black hissed, ignoring the way that Peter practically jumped out of his skin at the name. "What? Afraid to say the name of your old master? It wasn't me you've been hiding from; it was the Death Eaters that walked free. I heard things when I was in Azkaban, Peter; they blame you for Voldemort's downfall, because you led them to the Potters, false information they call it. If they find out that you're alive, you're a dead man!"

Peter gulped. "N-n-no."

"Tell Harry the truth, Wormtail! Tell him that you betrayed James and Lily! Tell him that you're the reason why his parents are dead! Tell him!"

Tears began to pour down Peter's cheeks now. "I-I didn't mean too."

"Let's kill him together, Moony, for old times' sake!"

Remus nodded. "Sounds fair enough, do you think that we should wait for Prongs, Harry?"

"Prongs?" Sirius asked; his face paling to an almost ghostly white. "James?"

Harry nodded. "I don't think that you should kill him at all. I don't think my mum would have wanted you to ... she suffered enough, and so has Da. Let the Dementors have him."

"He's right, you know." Remus replied. "Lily suffered enough as did

James.”

“Bring him up to the school, the Dementors can have him!” Harry suggested.

Sirius nodded. “Alright. James is alive?”

Harry nodded. “Aye. Let’s get Wormtail up to the school, and I’ll explain everything.”

Sirius could only nod as Remus conjured a stretcher to lift Snape. Hermione reached around to help Ron, and Sirius and Harry were chained to Peter as they dragged him along with them. “So you don’t live with your aunt and uncle?”

Harry shook his head, panting at the effort it took to drag Peter. “No, I live at Potter Manor with Da and Uncle Remus. I lived with the Dursleys for four years while Da and Uncle Remus took care of my mum. Voldemort tortured her into insanity. She ... didn’t know who anyone was and she was ...”

“Physically and mentally broken in every possible way. James was heartbroken.” Remus replied.

Sirius nodded as they stepped outside into the moonlight. “I had no idea that James was even alive.”

“I know, Da told me.”

Suddenly, Remus’ body stiffened and he let out a cry. “Shit! He’s going to transform, Sirius can you hold him off? Snape said that he didn’t take his potion tonight!” Harry exclaimed.

Sirius nodded and transformed into the dog before running towards Remus, he grabbed his arm and dragged him off into the forest, while he was still changing. Harry hurried over to Ron to help him up.

“Come on, we’ve got to get back to the castle. He turned around to grab Peter again but he had transformed and ran off into the night. “Damn it! He got away!”

Hermione grabbed Harry's hand. "You can't go running after him, Harry, come on!"

Harry heard the sound of a whining dog and he bolted into the woods, ignoring Hermione's protests, and ran into the night.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Harry woke up in the hospital wing he was surprised to hear yelling. Once he managed to figure out that Dumbledore was yelling at Fudge along with McGonagall, because the Dementors had kissed Sirius he shook his head, no, in denial.

"No!"

Dumbledore came in then and what happened next, Harry still found hard to believe. Hermione pulled something out from under her shirt, held Harry close as she turned it three times, and the next thing he knew he was back in the entrance hall.

He could see himself, Ron, and Hermione as they headed outside. He had immediately questioned Hermione about what was going on.

"It's a time turner, Harry."

"A time turner?" He asked. "What's that?"

"They're illegal technically," Hermione explained. "But McGonagall got one for me this year because I promised to only use it for academic reasons. How else do you think I've been getting to my classes all year?"

"You can turn back time?"

Hermione nodded. "With this time turner, yes I can. Time is not to be meddled with and Dumbledore wouldn't have sent us on this mission if it wasn't important. He obviously meant for us to save Sirius."

"How do we do that?"

Hermione shrugged. "I don't know. But I think the first thing we need to know is, where are we? We have to retrace our steps. But the most important thing is that we can't be seen."

Harry nodded. "Alright. What time is it?"

Hermione glanced down at her watch. "Seven, what were we doing at seven?"

"Going down to see Hagrid." He grinned as he realized why they were there. "Dumbledore wants us to save Buckbeak."

He ignored Hermione's protests as they headed towards Hagrid's cabin. The next little bit was extreme déjà vu. It went by quickly after that as they watched their evening flash before their eyes. Scabbers escaping, Ron chasing, Sirius bringing them into the tree, them coming out, Remus transforming, Harry saving himself from Dementors as well as Sirius, and then the two of them jumped on Buckbeak's back and flew up to Flitwick's office window.

Hermione opened the window as Sirius stared up at them in surprise. "What?"

Harry shook his head. "Just get on!"

They flew up to the top of the Astronomy Tower. Sirius jumped down and looked at Harry. "How can I ever thank you?"

"Just go. I'll write to you, Da's going to want to see you, but I'll have to explain things first."

Sirius nodded and he pulled Harry close for a hug. "I'll be waiting. Bye."

He climbed back up onto Buckbeak and flew off into the night, leaving Harry and Hermione waving below.

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## **Chapter 13: Padfoot and Prongs**

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XIII – Padfoot and Prongs**

Ginny stared at Harry with a somewhat surprised and half-amused look as he explained the events leading up to Sirius' escape. It was the following evening, and they were sitting close to the fire in the Gryffindor common room. She was feeling a mixture of feelings; both pride, because she had been right about Sirius, and shock over the adventure that they had had.

"Do you mean to tell me that Sirius Black spent the last twelve years in Azkaban prison for a crime that he never actually committed?"

Harry nodded as he stretched his legs out in the common room chair. It was late and they were going home the next day but Harry thought that he should share the news with Ginny, especially because she had told him that she didn't believe Sirius to be a bad person in the first place. "That about sums it up, yeah."

"That's horrible!" She exclaimed. "Why didn't someone do something?"

"Like what?" Harry asked. "The evidence was against him and Peter Pettigrew was presumed dead."

Ginny shrugged. "Well ... why didn't anyone think about it? I mean, listen you said that your Da chose Sirius to be the Secret Keeper but at the last minute Sirius convinced your parents to change over to Peter, well if he had really been working for Voldemort, wouldn't he jump at being able to hold the secret?"

Harry nodded. "I thought about that, but I think everyone probably assumed that he wanted to continue his double agent role for as long as possible. I mean, Peter was an unreliable source and he was



weak. Therefore, if he happened to be cornered it was almost a guarantee that he would squeal. I think everyone assumed that by Sirius choosing Peter and then leading the bad guys to him he didn't look like the bad guy. That way the blame could easily be pointed at Peter and no questions would be asked."

"That makes sense, in other words he would be saving his own ass."

"Exactly."

Ginny sighed. "That's too bad about Professor Lupin, though. Snape sure has some nerve, telling the entire school that he was a werewolf! And Professor Lupin being such a good friend of Sirius and your Da, he has to be crushed."

Harry shrugged. "That's Snape for you. Besides, I don't think Uncle Remus was that surprised. After all, he's pretty upset with himself for not taking the potion and getting loose on the school grounds. Let's just say that he's used to losing jobs. People always turn him away as soon as they find out that he's a werewolf. He used to be an Auror, you know, until the new department head that took over from Moody found out about his condition."

"That's wrong and stupid racism if you ask me! I mean, who cares if he's a werewolf? It only happens during the full moon and then he's a normal guy!"

"I know. Hermione was pissed at me because she yelled out in the shack that Uncle Remus was a werewolf and I didn't respond in horror like she and Ron did. And then she was mad because I never told her. I guess she's known since Snape took over DADA class that one day and made us write that paper on werewolves. As soon as he assigned it I knew what he was doing, after all he was making the potion for Uncle Remus." He shrugged. "But it's not something that I think of, I mean, I've known that he was a werewolf for longer than I can remember, so to me it's normal. But Hermione got bent out of shape about it."

"Hermione drives me batty sometimes!" Ginny confessed.

Harry laughed. "It's part of her nature. But for some reason we love her anyway." When Ginny laughed he grinned. "Besides, I've got bigger things to worry about at the moment. I asked Uncle Moony not to tell Da about Sirius. I want to talk to him myself and arrange a meeting between them. I think it would do both of them good."

Ginny smiled warmly at him. "Sirius never knew that your Da was alive?"

He shook his head. "No, by the time that he was in prison it hadn't been news that he had lived. Da didn't really make much news anyway as it was mostly me, you know, the Boy Who Lived crap and all that. And you don't exactly get the news in Azkaban. He was more than shocked at that tidbit which is why I need to talk to Da. Hopefully the summer will be good once the two of them are friends again and talking."

Ginny laughed. "It might be even better. I heard a rumour that the Quidditch World Cup is going to be hosted in England this year. Dad might get tickets."

Harry grinned. "That would be brilliant! I'm sure Da will try to get tickets too. He would never miss an opportunity like that. Well, I'm off to bed, Ginny, but I'll talk to you tomorrow."

She nodded. "Goodnight Harry." She watched him climb up the stairs and she sighed. She was glad to see him so happy. It was nice to know that his godfather and his father's best mate was actually an innocent man. It proved to the world that there was good and there was loyalty. She shook the thoughts from her head and headed up towards the girls' dormitories dreaming of a dreamless sleep.

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An owl from Sirius arrived to Harry during the train ride home. The tiny owl that came rushing in was overly excited and flew around Harry's head in circles. It took Harry over a minute to calm the overexcited bird and get the letter off its leg. He unravelled it and began to read out loud since it was only Ron, Hermione, and Ginny in the compartment.

**“Dear Harry, I cannot thank you enough for helping me escape that night. Fudge wasn’t going to give me a chance to explain things, I knew it. I would have had my soul sucked out of me then I would be worse than dead. So I thank you, though I think those words can’t possibly explain my gratitude. I wanted to tell you that it was me who sent you the Firebolt –”**

“Ha! I knew it!” Hermione exclaimed.

Harry glared at her. “But he wasn’t trying to kill me now was he?” When Hermione only pouted, he turned back to the letter. **“I had stopped to watch you play Quidditch a few times and let me say that you are an amazing flyer ... even better than James was. When I saw you lose your broom to the Whomping Willow, I thought that this was a good way to make it up to you. Think of it as twelve years worth of Christmas presents and birthday presents from your godfather. Also, this owl that I picked out, I thought maybe your friend Ron might want to keep him, as it is my fault that he no longer has a pet.”**

Ron glanced up at the owl and grinned. “Wicked. Tell him I said ‘thanks’, Harry.”

Harry nodded and turned back to the letter. **“Also, about the owl that you sent me, I understand that you need to talk to James first, but I think that it might be better if you let me talk to him. I can meet you anywhere you want as Snuffles, my furrier form. I still can’t get over the fact that he’s alive and even if he refuses to speak to me after everything has been explained, I need to see him at least once. Send me an owl with a destination and time and I’ll be in touch.”** Harry looked up from the letter and sighed. “I think he’s right, Da probably would take it better from Sirius himself, with Uncle Moony and I there to back him up. It would be more convincing.”

Ginny nodded. “That makes sense, Harry. I guess you’ll have to figure everything out.”

“Yeah.”

The train pulled into the station not too long after that. Harry dragged his trunk and Hedwig's cage out onto the platform. He hugged Hermione and Ginny goodbye, and said hello to the Weasleys, before he headed over to James who had Foolish sitting next to him. He grinned up at him as he approached.

"Hey, Da!"

James grinned. "I'm proud of you, Harry."

Harry's left eyebrow rose slightly as he bent down to scratch Foolish behind the ears. Foolish was happily wagging his tail, his tongue hanging out. "Okay. Why?"

"Because as I watched you step off that train I realized that this is the first year that your school year didn't end with me sitting by your bedside in the hospital wing."

Harry laughed. "I think that I should be insulted by that. But, it's sadly very true."

James laughed. "That it is. Let's go. You can tell me about the year and about what you know about Sirius being almost caught. By the time I got to Hogwarts, Fudge was ranting about his escape."

Harry grinned up at his father, silently smirking. "Yeah, I just might."

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When they arrived back at Potter Manor, Maddy informed James that Kingsley wanted him at work immediately. James nodded and after bidding Harry goodbye headed to work. Harry on the other hand, found this to be the perfect opportunity.

"Maddy, can I change who is and who isn't allowed in the house?"

Maddy looked up at Harry in surprise. "Yes, I have control over that. Why is you wanting to?"

“Listen Maddy, something happened at the end of the school year. Uncle Remus and I learned that Sirius is innocent, he was wrongly imprisoned. We need to get him to talk to Da. I want him to come to Potter Manor immediately, but I know that Da took him off the list.” Harry explained. “I need to put him back on ... and I need you to promise not to tell Da.”

Maddy sighed and then she stood in front of the fireplace. She muttered a few incoherent words and then turned back to Harry. “He is now allowed back into Potter Manor by apparition or floo. I won’t tell James. I just hope you know what you is doing, Harry.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks Maddy. Listen, can you also ban Peter Pettigrew?”

Maddy gave him a puzzled look. “But, he is dead, sir?”

“No, he’s not.”

Maddy didn’t question this; she simply turned and banned Peter from entering the Manor. “There.”

“Thanks, I owe you one.”

Maddy smiled warmly. “You do not. This is what I is here for. But I is wanting an explanation later.”

“Yes ma’am.” Harry replied with a grin.

Maddy shook her head at him and wandered into the kitchen, muttering something about like father like son and something to do with mischief makers, Marauders, and just plain trouble.

Harry ignored her and instead ran into the study to borrow some parchment and a quill. He quickly scribbled the following:

*Snuffles,*

*I haven’t told Da anything. But Maddy helped me change the settings on the house. Apparate or floo to Potter Manor ASAP. You can hide*

*as a dog until Da gets back. Then we will explain everything.*

*Harry*

He folded it up and gave it to Hedwig, telling her to go as fast as possible. She nipped his fingers affectionately to say that she understood and then she flew out the window. Harry watched her fly away until she was nothing but a speck in the sky before he turned and picked up his trunk. He was halfway across the entrance hall when Mickey came in.

“Harry! What is you doing?”

Harry put the trunk down and grinned. “I was just going to bring my trunk upstairs. I got it Mickey, don’t worry. I need to unpack anyway.”

“That is being my job, Harry.”

Harry shrugged. “Please, Mickey. I need to do something to keep my mind off of something.”

Mickey smiled. He had always had a soft spot for both Harry and James, but he found Harry to be particularly amusing. He had often done simple chores that James had never done, especially when he had first come from the Dursleys. He made his bed, cleaned his own bathroom and bedroom, and he tended to help both of the house elves with a lot of other everyday chores, such as cooking and dishes. Maddy didn’t mind, and neither did Mickey, it just confused them. But since he did enjoy doing them or simply didn’t mind, neither did they. Even if they did think it was the house elves job and not his.

“Of course. Would you like something to eat or drink?”

Harry shook his head. “Nah, I’m okay right now. Is Uncle Remus home?”

Mickey nodded. “Yes. He’s upstairs in his bedroom.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks Mickey. Hey, if Sirius Black comes in, tell me ASAP. It’s really important.”

“Got it.” Mickey replied before heading back into the kitchen.

Harry hurried upstairs to his room. He hung Hedwig’s cage on the hook in the corner before he unpacked his trunk. He placed all of his books on the shelves in his room and put his left over potions ingredients in the cabinet in the corner before placing all of his school robes into the laundry hamper in his bathroom. He put his trunk in the closet before taking a seat on his bed, grinning when Foolish jumped up beside him.

“Hey boy, did you miss me?” He asked, as he rubbed his belly. Foolish barked once and then laid there like the dead. Harry grinned. “You big suck-up.” He gave the dog one good pat on his belly before heading over to Remus’ room. When he heard Remus call out to come in, he stepped inside.

Remus looked up from his desk and smiled. “Hey, Harry. I didn’t realize that you were home.”

“Yeah, I just got back a little while ago. Da got called into work. Listen, I just had Maddy change the wards so that Sirius can get in and Peter can’t. Then I sent Sirius a letter telling him to floo or apparate here ASAP.” Harry explained.

Remus looked up in surprise. “You work fast.”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t want him running from the law and living out on the streets. And once Da finds out that he really is innocent ... well, I think that he’ll be more than happy with letting him live with us.”

Remus grinned. “Yeah, I’m sure that he would too. I’m still trying to figure out how much I should blame myself for not realizing and not trusting Sirius enough to know that no matter what it looked like, he would never betray his friends.”

“I’m glad that he didn’t. I think that makes a big difference, even though Peter still betrayed his friends in the end.”

“For some reason ... I see that more than I do Sirius. I don’t know

why I never thought of it before.”

Harry shrugged. “Because it never made sense before, not when you assumed that Peter was dead, murdered.”

“You’re right.”

Harry nodded. “Well, I’ll let you get back to work. I’m just going to go read downstairs for a bit until Sirius gets here. I just hope he gets here before Da does. I told Hedwig to hurry.”

“I’m sure he won’t be too long. I doubt he left Scotland after he escaped from Hogwarts.” Remus explained.

Harry grinned. “I hope so. Come on downstairs soon too, before Da gets home. I don’t want to face his anger alone.”

Remus laughed. “Can’t say I blame you. I’ll be down in a little bit.”

He nodded and headed back downstairs, Foolish dogging his heels as he walked into the living room. He had just sat down and got through three pages of his Sidney Sheldon novel when Sirius stepped into the room with Mickey closing the door behind him.

“Hello Harry.”

Harry grinned and jumped to his feet. “Hey! I’m so glad that you made it! Listen, Da got called into work and I have no idea when he will be back but when he comes in I think that you should be a dog.”

“He knows what I look like in my animagus form.”

“I know. But I don’t think that he’ll pay too much attention. You can play with Foolish.”

Sirius laughed as he scratched the black lab behind his ears.  
“Foolish?”

Harry shrugged. “I was five, give me a break.”



Sirius grinned. "Thanks for doing this, Harry."

"No problem. I want to get to know you. Da's told me so many stories about things that you guys did when you were in school and stuff. And I know that Da misses you, even if he won't admit it. This entire year has been crazy for him. Ever since he found out that you escaped he's been a worry wart. He wouldn't let me go anywhere. Everyone thought that you had escaped to try to kill me." Harry explained.

"Well, that makes me feel better," he replied with sarcasm as he absently continued to stroke Foolish. "But I guess it's understandable. I know that the evidence was against me when I went to prison."

Harry nodded just as the living room door opened. "Hi Maddy."

Maddy smiled. "Harry, James just came home. He's in the dining room talking to Mickey but he's on his way here. Mr. Shacklebolt only wanted him to pick up a few papers."

Harry grinned. "Thanks." He turned to Sirius, but he had already transformed. Harry scratched Snuffles behind the ears, laughing when he ran at Foolish and the two dogs began to play-wrestle on the ground. He grinned up at James when he walked in. "Hey Da, what did you have to go in for?"

James glanced at the two black dogs briefly before turning to Harry. "They thought that there was a lead on Sirius and Kingsley just wanted to talk to me about it since I'm in charge of that investigation. Harry, where did that dog come from?"

Harry shrugged. "I found him outside. He and Foolish seem to be getting along. Listen Da, I need to talk to you about something really important."

James took his attention away from the scruffy black dog, and turned to his son. "What's up?"

"I think that you should sit down."

James sat down before speaking. "What did you do?"

Harry grinned. "Why do you think that I did something?"

"Because you look guilty."

"Oh," Harry replied. "Well, I sort of did. Okay, I'm just going to blurt this out." He looked up when Remus came into the room. "Uncle Moony, I was just about to tell Da about what happened on the night when you forgot to take your potion."

Remus nodded and stood behind James; placing his hand on his friend's shoulder, mouthing that he would hold James back if necessary. "Alright."

Harry nodded and then quickly blurted it out. "Well, you see it goes like this. We helped Sirius escape from Fudge and the Dementors, and he's innocent because Peter is still alive."

James stared at his son in shock for two full minutes before he managed to form words. "WHAT?"

Harry gulped and turned to Sirius just as he transformed back into himself. "Sirius is here, Da."

James jumped to his feet, anger flashing in his eyes as Remus pulled James' wand out of his pocket to keep it from James' reach and held his friend firm. "YOU GET THE HELL OUT OF MY HOME! HOW DARE YOU EVEN SET FOOT IN MY HOUSE AFTER WHAT YOU DID, YOU FUCKING BASTARD! YOU TOOK MY WIFE FROM ME! YOU BETRAYED ME!"

James ripped away from Remus and planted his fist into Sirius' face. The two of them began to roll across the living room floor, fists slapping and pounding on each other's bodies. Harry and Remus managed to pull them apart, but not before Sirius had a bloody nose and a split eyebrow, and James a split lip and what looked like the possibility of a good shiner. Power was radiating from James and a bolt of blue light that simply licked of the rage and power that James was feeling flew from his hands and hit Sirius, knocking him back.

Harry hurried over to help Sirius to his feet.

“DA, NO!” Harry yelled, standing in front of Sirius. “You don’t understand. It was all a mix-up.”

James’ smoke coloured eyes turned to his son’s as he wiped blood from his lip. “A mix-up? I bet. You’d better start explaining, Harry, and you’d better start explaining now, because I don’t want this bastard in my house.”

Harry nodded. “Da, Peter is still alive. Sirius never killed him and he never betrayed you, Peter did.”

“Harry’s telling the truth, James.” Remus replied.

James’ eyes turned to Sirius now. His breathing had levelled out, but his eyes were still the colour of dark smoke. Harry could see that he was working to control his magic from exploding out of him again. “Explain.”

Sirius nodded. “Prongs, God, you know that I would never betray you. I thought that Peter was the fucking perfect Secret Keeper. I thought that no one would ever go after him, that no one would ever suspect that you would choose him. But he was working for Voldemort, had been for over two years. I thought ... I thought you and Lily were both dead! I cornered him on a street. The next thing I knew, he was yelling at me, accusing me of betraying you, and then he cut off his finger, killed thirteen muggles in the area and turned into a rat.”

James smirked. “And you expect me to believe that? Where’s the proof? Where’s Peter?”

“He got away.” Harry said quietly causing James’ head to turn abruptly back to him. “He’s been living his life as a rat for twelve years. Ron’s rat to be exact, Scabbers. Sirius saw Ron’s picture in the newspaper with Scabbers ... Peter on his shoulder. He recognized him and escaped to go after him. We were in the Shrieking Shack and Sirius and Uncle Moony made him transform. He admitted to everything.”

James gulped. "Where is he now?"

Remus sighed. "When I changed, he escaped in the chaos, which is why Sirius wasn't given his freedom. No one believed him or the kids."

"And you saw this?" James asked.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, Da, I did, Uncle Remus, Ron, Hermione, and Snape too but he denies it. He says that Sirius confounded us. But he's a git."

"Greasy haired git." Sirius and James both replied simultaneously.

They looked at each other then and then James embraced Sirius in a hug. "I'm so sorry, Padfoot. I'm so sorry for ever doubting you."

Sirius nodded as he blinked back tears. "I thought that you were dead! Damn it, James! I thought that you were fucking dead and I blamed myself! I'm the one that suggested you use Peter!"

"I don't blame you. I agreed with your decision!" James replied, tears in his eyes as well.

When they pulled away they were both grinning at each other.

Harry grinned. "Does this mean that Sirius can live with us?"

James grinned back. "Sure does, Sport. Padfoot's not going anywhere."

Sirius grinned. "Thanks, Prongs."

James nodded. "Anytime. Come on, let me get you a room and I'll start filling you in on what's happened in the last twelve years."

Sirius grinned broadly as he followed James out of the room. "Sounds like a good plan."

Harry smiled at Remus. "I think that that went well."

Remus laughed. "And it only took a few blows. It's nice to know that they're back to normal. Come on; let's go help James tell the story. He always leaves out the important parts."

Harry grinned as he followed Remus out of the room. Yeah, living with three Marauders was bound to be fun.

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## **Chapter 14: Summering with the Marauders**

**Author's Notes:** Please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XIV – Summering with the Marauders**

Harry didn't even know what to expect when it came to having three, instead of two, Marauders living with him. He didn't think that it was going to be too different from before, but he remembered from the stories that he had heard that Sirius and James had always been the more wild of the four Marauders.

Once Sirius had been caught up on important events and other things that he had missed out on in the years that he had spent in prison, James had given him what apparently was his old bedroom. Sirius had moved into Potter Manor when he was sixteen after he had run away from home. The Black family had wanted nothing to do with him because first of all, he had wound up in Gryffindor which they found to be incredibly insulting to their family; and secondly, he disagreed with everything that they did since they were dark wizards, or dark wizard supporters. Andrew and Gwen Potter had been more than willing to take Sirius in. They had loved and accepted him as a second son.

James had given him his old room and then the two of them had gone to Number Twelve Grimmauld Place, the home that Sirius had inherited from his parents because he was the only Black left. There

they had found his wand, his old motorbike and everything else that he wanted to bring with him. James had then taken money from Sirius and bought him a new wardrobe as he needed new clothes other than his ratty prison uniform. Once he was showered and his hair trimmed so that the black locks fell just so around his face, Harry understood why people had once thought that he was handsome. His sunken face was soon filled with Maddy and Mickey's good cooking, his eyes even lit up with laughter from the joy of just living again.

Harry also found that Sirius had not only stories to tell him, but pranks and tricks to show him. He had even offered to help Harry with his animagus transformation. James had started him off as promised with the potion. Harry had seen four animals which confused James, Sirius, and Remus to no end. He had seen a lion, an owl, a phoenix, and a wolf. Harry wondered if that meant he could be all four animals. The Marauders weren't sure but they agreed to help him out. They decided to start with the phoenix form since it was a magical animal and they weren't sure how that was supposed to work.

While James was at work, Sirius helped Harry work on the transformation. They started out slowly, having Harry focus on only changing one part of his body at a time, his left hand. Since Harry had mastered the elemental wandless magic so young, he was trying to change pieces of his body wandlessly. After two weeks of nothing, he was beginning to get frustrated.

"Harry, don't worry, this is a really hard thing to learn. It took James and I the better part of two years to master it." Sirius explained when Harry groaned in frustration.

"I just wish that I could change something! But I'm not even making my skin turn a different colour."

Sirius laughed. "You'll get it eventually, don't worry. Let's take a break for a bit. Want to go out and drag Remus outside for a game of Quidditch?"

Harry grinned. "Yeah!"

After playing Quidditch for a few hours, they went back inside just as

James came home. They decided to work on the transformations some more, but after two hours Harry still hadn't managed to change anything. Neither James nor Sirius seemed to think that this was a big deal, though. They told him that he would get it eventually.

Harry sat down on the couch next to James. "Da, did you find it this frustrating when you were trying to become an animagus?"

James smiled. "Yes, Harry, really you'll get it soon. There are only a few vital parts of your body that are extremely hard to change but once you get them, the transformation will be a breeze."

Harry nodded. "Alright, so how was work?"

James shrugged. "Not too bad, I'm still leading the search for Sirius. Of course, I have absolutely no idea where he might be," he replied with a smirk. "But the Ministry is not too worried about finding him anymore. Fudge is much too embarrassed by the fact that he escaped right from under his nose!"

Sirius grinned broadly. "Well, I have Harry to thank for that one."

Harry grinned. "I bet Hagrid was ecstatic when he woke up and found Buckbeak in his garden."

James smiled. "Well, we hardly have any room for a Hippogriff and besides, Hagrid loves Buckbeak, he deserves to have him back. Dumbledore told me that he's changed his name to Witherwings so that no one will get suspicious."

Harry laughed. "Very true, and very Hagrid."

Remus came into the room and took a seat. "It was too quiet in here, it worried me."

Sirius laughed. "What, do you think we're going to cause trouble or something? We're adults now, Moony."

"So?" James asked. "Does that mean that we can't cause trouble?"

Harry grinned at them. It was so good to see his Da so happy and carefree again. He couldn't remember the last time that he had seen his father so happy. When Sirius had escaped, and they had believed that he had betrayed them and wanted to kill Harry, James had been a wreck. He had lived the entire year in fear. Now that he knew the truth, he was laughing and joking around with his friends.

"Hey Prongs! Remember that time we went in to Hogsmeade and we were standing outside the Shrieking Shack and Betty Lamar came over to you, flirting so badly? She wanted you, brushing herself up close and telling you how sexy you looked on a broom." Sirius replied with a grin. "And then Lily showed up."

Harry grinned. "What did Mum do?"

Sirius laughed. "Well, she walked over and gave him this look of annoyance that he happened to even be there. This was in fifth year and she didn't like him then. James turns around and he sees her, so he grins, causing Betty to swoon but his eyes are all for Lily-Love. Then Lily gives him this disgusted look and says that since big-breasted blondes seem to be his style that he has no business flirting with her anymore. James turned beet red and tried to go after her, but she ignored him."

James glared at Sirius. "Yeah, well Lily didn't realize that she was in love with me yet at that point in her life. Besides, it was embarrassing, Betty was hanging all over me. She wouldn't take no for an answer. I was not interested!"

Sirius grinned, his eyes twinkling in laughter. "I was. It only took me two days to convince Betty that I was the guy for her, instead of James."

"Harry, Betty Lamar was an idiot," Remus replied. "Her goal in life was to marry James because he was handsome and rich and has a title."

Sirius shrugged. "Then she settled for me because I was sexier and rich."



Harry laughed. "But you didn't marry her."

"Hell no!" Sirius exclaimed. "I wouldn't ever want to marry her; we didn't have a single thing in common. Besides she was a gold-digger/fortune hunter, whatever you want to call them these days. But she sure knew how to make a bloke ..." he trailed off at the look on James' face. "Er, well ... after we broke up, she tried to convince me that she was pregnant with my kid. Scared the crap out of me at first. But she was lying, she wasn't even pregnant. That's the kind of girl she was. James never looked at her twice, his eyes were all for Lily."

Harry grinned. "Da told me that Mum never paid any attention to him until seventh year."

Sirius nodded. "Oh, she looked; she just didn't want to admit that she was interested, as Prongs was a prat. But he smartened up and Lily came to her senses. What about you, Harry, got a pretty girl in your life?"

Harry blushed. "No."

Sirius grinned. "Aw come on, there's not a girl at school that you fancy a bit?"

Harry shrugged. "There's this one girl ... Cho Chang. She's the Ravenclaw seeker but she's a year older than me. She's really pretty. She's got long black hair and grey eyes."

"Ah, going to ask her out?"

Harry shook his head. "No, I don't think so. I wouldn't know how ... I mean, well, erm, no."

James, Sirius, and Remus exchanged knowing looks and then James sighed. "Harry, I think that the four of us need to have a serious talk."

Harry glanced up at his father and his two honorary uncles. "About what?"

James blushed this time. "About uh ... girls and stuff."

Harry nodded. "Er, okay."

Sirius grinned. "Alright, I'll start. Listen, Harry, you don't have to be worried about asking this girl out if you really like her. It's not that hard to ask a girl out. Girls are weird, but they are pretty predictable at times."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"Well," James replied. "You see, girls tend to travel with a bunch of other girls almost all of the time. So the only nerve wracking thing is getting them on their own, if you don't want to talk to a particular girl in front of all of her friends. But usually if you just ask them to speak to the one you have your eye on alone, they will usually step away from their friends."

Remus nodded. "Just ask the girl if you can talk. Maybe be friendly with her, ask her how her summer was, how classes are going, what she's been up to ... simple things like that."

Sirius nodded. "And then, once the conversation starts going normally, you'll feel more comfortable with her, then you ask her out."

"But what would I say?" Harry asked. "I mean, she is older than me."

Sirius grinned. "Don't worry about it, you're Harry Potter! Now, all you have to say is: *Cho, would you like to go to Hogsmeade with me?* Simple as that."

Harry nodded. "Oh, well, what if she says no?"

James laughed and then he slid his arm around his son's shoulders. "You're really worried about this aren't you? Look, if she says no, just say something like ... *'Alright, I just thought that it would be cool to get to know you but I understand, maybe some other time.'* Then walk away. She'll think that you're a sweetheart, even if she isn't interested. But she'll tell her friends what a great guy you are."

"Exactly," Remus replied. "Girls are predictable that way. And when

you begin dating them, well, then you've got to make sure that you treat them right."

"Treat them right?" Harry asked. "Why do you make that sound like something that I wouldn't do?"

Sirius shook his head. "No, not something you wouldn't do, it's just that when you're dating a girl, you treat her a bit differently. For example, girls like to hear compliments like that they look nice or their hair makes them look nice or you like their outfit. Simple things that make them feel good about themselves."

"And flowers, girls love flowers. I definitely suggest flowers for the first date, but after that it's your choice. Also, do gentlemen things for them like pulling out their chair for them to sit down before you, or opening the door and allowing them to walk through first. Girls go for that." James replied.

Sirius nodded. "And the first kiss ... don't use tongue. Much better to save that for the second kiss."

Harry blushed. "Kissing ... oh boy."

James laughed. "Harry, you don't have to be nervous. I understand that you are just at that age where you want to do it, but at the same time still find it embarrassing. Kissing is good."

"It's usually good to give the girl a kiss on the lips goodnight after your date." Remus suggested.

"Oh," Harry replied.

James nodded. "And now, onto the more serious end of this conversation. Girls and dating are easy enough and once you get the hang of it you'll be fine, but there is one very important thing that we need to also discuss."

"What's that?" Harry asked.

James sighed; blushing a bit himself. "Sex."

Harry turned scarlet, the blush starting at the nape of his neck. "Uh ... I see."

Sirius grinned. "This should be embarrassing for all of us."

James nodded. "Okay, Harry, you see when a man and woman ... love each other -"

"Don't sugar coat it, Prongs! Now, when a man and a woman want to shag each other senseless -"

"Padfoot!"

"What? My statement's more true than yours!"

James ignored him and turned back to Harry. "Well, when the time comes, and you decide that you want to um ... shag. There are some important things that you need to consider ..."

One hour later, Harry was in his room staring at the wall. That had been the most mortifying conversation of his entire life. He knew that his Da had not done it to embarrass him, but because it was important. His fourteenth birthday had been a week ago but the conversation had been embarrassing. He had learned more about sex than he had ever imagined. Once they had gotten through the basics and onto the proper protection charms and potions, Sirius had decided that it was also important for Harry to learn how to properly pleasure a woman. They had gone into specifics of things that Harry couldn't even imagine thinking about, let alone actually doing. But at the same time, while he was embarrassed he was extremely grateful to all three of them. He now knew that when his time came, he would be prepared in every possible way. Even over how to actually do it.

He laughed at himself as Foolish jumped up onto the bed. "Hey buddy, you heard that talk too, eh?" He scratched him behind the ears as Hedwig flew in through the window. "What's that you got there, girl?"

Hedwig hooted as she landed on his shoulder and held her leg out so

that he could take the letter. Once he had the letter in his hand, he stroked her feathers softly. He ripped open the letter and his grin widened as he read what was there.

**Harry,**

**Guess what? Dad got tickets to the Quidditch World Cup! I can't believe it! But he managed it, something through the Ministry. He got tickets for you, Professor Lupin, and your Da as well. It's in two weeks!**

**Mum wants to know if you can come stay with us three days in advance so that we can pack up and get ready. Apparently there's a portkey nearby that will be set up to lead us straight to the camp. Hermione is coming too. Bill and Charlie are even coming back to England for the game. It's going to be brilliant!**

**By the way, tell Snuffles that we named the owl Pig, he's crazy and he never calms down. The bloody bird is going to drive us mad! Ginny actually named him Pigwidgeon – which is a stupid name. I tried to change it, but was too late, and now he's Pig. Also, Percy got a job at the Ministry of Magic. Don't get him started on his boss, Barty Crouch, he goes crazy with Mr. Crouch this and Mr. Crouch that. He's working in the Department of International Magical Co-Operation. Hope to see you soon.**

**Write back soon with your response.**

**Ron**

Harry grinned as he raced downstairs and into the living room, thoughts of the embarrassing talk gone from his mind. "Da, look what Ron sent me!"

James took the letter from Harry and quickly read it over. "Arthur got tickets?"

Harry nodded. "Can we go?"

James grinned. "Damn right we can." He turned to his friends. "Arthur

got us tickets to the Cup.”

Sirius sighed. “I wish I could see that.”

Harry shrugged. “Well, are we allowed to bring pets into the stadium?”

James grinned. “We most certainly can! Brilliant, Harry, I think we’ll bring our dogs Foolish and Snuffles.”

“Brilliant! Can I write back to Ron and tell him we’ll be there?”

James nodded. “Yeah and tell him that I need to know the price of the tickets to pay Arthur for our three.”

Harry nodded as he ran back upstairs and quickly scrawled a response.

*Ron,*

*Da says ‘brilliant’! Uncle Remus, Da, Foolish, Snuffles, and I will be there – after all, Da says that dogs are allowed in the stadium! Da wants to know the price of the tickets, though, so that he can pay your dad for ours.*

*Let me know what day you need us to come, and if you need us to bring anything specific. I can’t wait!*

*Harry*

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Harry woke up with a start that evening. His breathing was heavy and his scar was hurting on his forehead. Foolish was growling at the air as he looked up at Harry. He closed his eyes and brought his dream back to the surface. Then he climbed out of bed and headed into the master bedroom. He shook James awake quickly.

“Da, Da wake up!” Harry murmured.

James groaned and opened his eyes. "Harry? What time is it?"

"Three a.m. I need to talk to you."

James sat up, rubbing his hands over his face. "What's up, Harry?"

Harry began to pace back and forth across the room. "I just had a dream, well but it feels like it wasn't a dream and when I woke up my scar was hurting."

James looked at Harry with concern now. "What happened in the dream, Harry?"

"I was seeing the dream through the eyes of this muggle named Frank ... Bryce I believe. But he was thinking about how fifty years ago at the Riddle House in Little Hangleton, the three Riddles had been murdered. No one understood what had happened as the three of them were all in perfect health, except for the fact that they were dead. He was the caretaker of the mansion. He was brought in for questioning but they couldn't prove anything. Then it was back to present day. He woke up because his leg was bothering him, because of an injury from the war. He saw lights in the windows of the house, thought it was just some kids. He went in to investigate and he heard voices. There's a high-pitched whispery voice and Wormtail is there. The voice asks Wormtail where Nagini is, he says that he needs to be milked so that he can be fed. He tells Wormtail that they will stay until the Quidditch World Cup is over. Wormtail said something about something being done without me, but the voice says he wants me. Then, I realized that the voice was Voldemort. They said something about a woman named Bertha Jorkins being killed, but she had been useful. Then this snake appears and Voldemort starts talking to it. The snake is named Nagini. He finds out that the muggle is in the hallway, listening. Then he orders his chair to be turned. I don't know what was on that chair, but it was Voldemort. I don't think he had a body, but he could hold a wand because he killed the muggle. And then I woke up and my scar was hurting." Harry quickly blurted out in one go.

James was pale now as he stared at Harry. "You dreamed this?"

Harry nodded. "I think it might have actually happened. Last term, I overheard Trelawney predict that a loyal servant would escape and help Voldemort return to power, but I had forgotten about it because I was distracted by everything that happened with Sirius. But Peter he was ... he was the one helping Voldemort plot to do something with me and Peter got away from us that night."

"If I ever lay eyes on that rat, I'm going to kill him with my bare hands," James replied in a cold voice that surprised Harry. "Listen, I'm going to tell Dumbledore about your dream tomorrow. But for now, there's nothing that you can do. I think that you should just head back to bed."

Harry nodded. "Alright, goodnight Da."

James nodded. "Goodnight Harry. And Harry?"

Harry turned to look at his father. "Yeah?"

"Thanks for telling me about this."

Harry smiled as he headed out of the room. "No problem, I just hope that it was really only a dream."

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Finally, it was time for them to go to the Quidditch World Cup. Harry was practically bursting with excitement. They had spent the last evening at the Weasleys house. Percy really was going a bit crazy in Harry's opinion, and was apparently busy writing a report on cauldron thickness. He also finally got a chance to meet Bill and Charlie who were completely awesome, in his opinion. He got to know Bill a bit better though as Ginny seemed to be closer to Bill than Charlie and Harry ended up sitting next to her during dinner. But, before dinner started, Harry, James, and Remus had something important to do.

James stood up with his hand on Snuffles' head outside in the backyard of Burrow. Ginny was playing with Foolish, who seemed to have fallen in love with her. "Um, excuse me, but I have an announcement to make."



The yard fell silent as everyone turned around to look at him.

“Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Remus discovered something at the end of the school year. I know that Ginny is aware of what that is, but I would like to make everyone else that is here aware of it as well. But first I need for you to promise that you will not freak out and will not go to the authorities.” James explained.

Percy looked flustered by this. “Are you doing something illegal?”

James nodded. “In a way, yes, but only because the Ministry doesn’t have the full story, and refuses to listen to the full story. Can I count on you all?”

Once everyone had agreed, James gestured to Harry, who began to explain.

“You see, thirteen years ago, Dumbledore told my parents to go into hiding under the Fidelius Charm. Well, Da chose Sirius Black to be his Secret Keeper, but at the last minute, they changed it over to Peter Pettigrew. They thought that no one would ever suspect someone like him, and that Voldemort -” everyone shuttered but Harry ignored it. “- would obviously go after Sirius. But it turned out that Peter had been secretly working for Voldemort for two years. We didn’t find that out until recently.”

Remus nodded and stood up as well. “Sirius dragged Ron, Harry, and Hermione into the Shrieking Shack and I found them a few minutes later. To my surprise, there was another person there, someone that Ron knew as Scabbers.”

Mrs. Weasley glanced up in surprise. “Percy’s old rat, Scabbers?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, except that his name is not Scabbers.”

James sighed. “When we were in school, Sirius, Peter, and I discovered that Remus was a werewolf. We hardly failed to notice that he disappeared during the full moon. We confronted him about it and he admitted to his condition. We wanted to help him. We

understood that he went through a painful transformation, so we decided that if we became animagi we could be there with him during his wolf form. We worked on it for two years. I can become a white stag, Peter a rat, and Sirius a scruffy black dog.”

Everyone’s eyes went to the dog sitting calmly next to James.

James nodded. “This is Sirius. But no he is not a murderer or the one who betrayed me. Peter Pettigrew is still alive.”

Ron made a growling sound in his throat. “When Sirius cornered him in the street he cut off his own finger and transformed into a rat. He’s been living with us ever since as Scabbers. Remember how he was missing a toe? Professor Lupin and Sirius made him transform back into himself and he admitted to everything.”

Bill looked up in surprise as Sirius transformed back into himself. “Then why is Sirius still a wanted criminal?”

Sirius spoke for the first time. “Because, as we were leaving the shack with Peter in tow, Moony transformed. Peter escaped in the chaos. Fudge refuses to believe the witnesses.”

Everyone was silent for a few minutes except for Ginny. She walked over to Sirius and pulled him into a warm hug that shocked him to the core. “I told Harry months ago that I didn’t believe that you had hurt anyone. He thought I was bit crazy but I was right. I’m glad that you escaped and don’t worry, your name will be cleared soon.” She kissed his cheek and then grinned at him.

Sirius grinned back at her. “Thanks. Ginny, right?”

She smiled up at him. “Yes, Mr. Black.”

He grinned. “Call me Sirius.”

After that, the evening went quite well. Percy continued to grumble but he was soon talking loudly during dinner about Mr. Crouch. Then, he began to complain that they weren’t getting the support they needed from the Department of Magical Games and Sports and from

Ludo Bagman, though Harry wasn't sure about what kind of support he was talking about. He then brought up about how careless Ludo was to lose someone from his department and that Bertha Jorkins had been missing for a long time now. Harry's eyes flew to James' and his father only nodded at him. Harry knew that James was telling him not to worry, but he couldn't help recall the name from the dream he had. He knew that his father was thinking the same thing.

Bill grinned at Harry. "It's nice to finally meet you, Harry. I've heard so much about you from Ron, Ginny, and the twins. I never did thank you for saving my sister's life a year ago either."

Harry smiled at Bill. "It was no problem. I would do it again if I had to. It wasn't her fault, it was Voldemort's fault."

Bill nodded. "I'm glad that you see that. It's nice to know it's not only me who is working on convincing Firefly of that."

After dinner, Harry learnt from Ron that the twins were in tons of trouble with Mrs. Weasley. Apparently they hadn't achieved nearly as many O.W.L.s as she had hoped. She had also discovered that they wanted to open a joke shop. The sounds and bangs that had been heard from their room for years were actually experiments. They had created a lot of different products for *Weasleys Wizard Wheezes*. They then talked about the game the next day, Ireland versus Bulgaria.

It was a tight fit that night when it came to sleeping arrangements. Ron, Fred, George, and Harry were in Ron's room; Remus, James, Bill, Charlie, and Sirius were in the twins' room; Hermione was in with Ginny; and Percy got his room to himself because he had to work.

Ginny couldn't sleep that night from excitement. When she finally did drift off, nightmares followed. She had tossed and turned in her bed, memories of the Chamber haunting her as she tried to sleep. Tom was there, smiling at her, touching her in ways that no eleven-year-old girl should be touched. He was whispering to her, telling her that he was going to kill her; that he was going to suck the soul from her body so that he could live; that no one would even miss her if she was gone. He also told her that no one loved her, and if she

disappeared no one would even notice, or even care, that she was gone. She bolted upright, the dream ending just as she had faded into unconsciousness.

She was drenched in sweat and shivering. She ran her fingers through her hair and closed her eyes. Why had she dreamed of that? She hadn't dreamed of the Chamber in a few months. She had gotten so good at blocking it out. She stood up quickly as the memory of the dream came back to the surface. She slipped into her robe and took a quick shower before she pulled on some pyjama bottoms since she had slept in a stolen Pride of Portree jersey from Bill before she headed downstairs.

She didn't want to wake anyone up, but she knew from experience that after a dream like that, she wasn't going to be able to go back to sleep. She stepped into the kitchen, heading over to rekindle the fire in the hearth before she moved to the stove to make herself some hot chocolate. She heard a sound in the doorway and turned around, surprised to see Sirius standing there.

"Ginny, what are you doing up so late?" He asked as he stepped into the room and took a seat at the table.

Ginny shrugged. "I had a bad dream. I was just making some hot chocolate, would you like a cup?"

Sirius nodded. "Sure, since you're making it."

She nodded and poured them each a cup before she sat across from him. "I'm going to go sit outside in the garden so I don't wake anyone. Want to come outside?"

Sirius smiled. "Sure that sounds good."

The two of them took a seat on the old wooden swing in the backyard. Ginny curled her legs under and sipped her hot chocolate before she turned to him. "What are you doing up so late?"

"Same as you." He was quiet for a few moments and then he spoke up. "Ginny, can I ask you something?"

“Of course.”

Sirius looked up at her. “Earlier, you just accepted the fact that I wasn’t actually a murderer ... I mean, the news had barely been told and you just ... you hugged me. Why?”

Ginny managed a small smile as her heart thudded painfully in her chest. Her dream was still too close to the surface. She pushed the thought away and thought instead about the surprise that had radiated from him when she had hugged him earlier. “Because I just knew that you weren’t. I said as much to Harry too; that I didn’t think you were as bad as you had been made out to be. That you were a good person inside. It’s something that I’ve been able to do for a long time; it’s only gotten stronger since Tom.”

Sirius gave her a puzzled look. “Tom?”

“Yeah, Tom Marvolo Riddle or Lord Voldemort. Depends on what you want to call him.”

“I didn’t know that was his name. But I guess he went through a lot of trouble to make sure no one knew his real name.” Sirius replied. “How do you know it?”

Ginny jumped, spilling a bit of her hot chocolate onto the table. “I’m sorry, it’s just ... well, I guess I should be over it now, it did happen over a year ago. It’s just, my nightmare, well it was about ... Sirius, when you were at Hogwarts did you ever hear anything about the Chamber of Secrets?”

Sirius nodded. “Yes, I did. It was a legend. Salazar Slytherin supposedly built a secret chamber where he did his work. I heard he kept some kind of monster down there. James and I tried to find it once but when we couldn’t we assumed it was just that, a legend.”

Ginny nodded. “Well, it’s not a legend. It’s very, very real. The Chamber, the monster, everything. You see, my first year at Hogwarts, I assumed that Fred and George would you know, take me under their wing so to speak like they did at home. But naturally at

school they had their own friends and hardly wanted their little sister hanging around. I mean, they weren't mean to me or anything and they were there when I needed them I just ... I was on my own. And Ron, well ... I couldn't hang out with him. I had ... well I had a terrible crush on Harry when I was eleven. Every time I was in a room with him, I would drop something or walk into something. It was terribly embarrassing. Once I even put my elbow in the butter dish. And of course it didn't help that my brothers were teasing me about it. He was my first real crush and all."

Sirius smiled. "So, because of Harry you couldn't be near Ron."

Ginny nodded, blushing a bit. "Yeah. I mean, I knew Harry wasn't interested in me anyway so the more I embarrassed myself, the worse it was. Anyway, when we got home from Diagon Alley, I found this diary in my transfiguration textbook. I didn't think much of it. I mean, I figured since it was in there, my parents must have known, right? Well, I started writing in it. I had just finished my last diary anyway, and I needed a new one. I've always kept extensive diaries ever since I was about seven years old. Bill used to call them the Ginny Chronicles." She smiled at the memory.

Sirius grinned. "Bill seems like a great guy. You're close with him?"

She nodded. "The closest. Other than Charlie, Bill is my favourite brother. Bill and Charlie were always the ones who were around when I needed them. Percy every once and while and as for Fred, George, and Ron ... they just picked on me."

He laughed. "It's what siblings do I'm afraid. So, you were starting a new entry into the Ginny Chronicles?"

Ginny laughed. "Yes. So this diary that I found was empty except for the name Tom Marvolo Riddle written on the back. So I started writing in it ... you know, explaining my problems and how I had a crush on the famous Harry Potter and how he was never going to notice me and the diary wrote back. At first, I panicked. I mean, dad had always warned me not to trust anything when you couldn't see where it kept its brain. But I just thought, well, he's only answering me and being my friend. He was wonderful. I trusted him with all of my

deepest fears and my secrets. Well, as many secrets and fears as an eleven-year-old can have. He was charming, and he made me feel important. But soon, I started getting black outs. Like, I would find myself in places and not know how I got there. Once I found myself covered in blood and feathers. I didn't understand. I talked to Tom and I told him that I thought I was going crazy. He was very supportive and assured me that I wasn't and that I was probably just a little stressed out over school work. Anyway, something in me snapped and I tried to get rid of the diary. You see, people in school were being attacked, and on Halloween, it said on the wall in blood that the Chamber of Secrets had been opened once more."

"But you got rid of the diary so you were okay?"

Ginny shook her head. "I did get rid of it, yes, but things weren't okay. Everyone in school thought that Harry was the heir of Slytherin. At a dueling club, he had spoken Parseltongue and everyone thought that he was attacking the students. Then, to make matters worse in my life, I lost a bet with Fred and George, and I had to send a singing valentine that the twins had written. Of course, they made me send it to Harry. He was so embarrassed when he received it. I mean, it didn't have my name on it or anything, but it was obvious that it had been from me. I mean, he's thick ... but not that thick."

Sirius laughed. "He's a bit like James in that matter. What did the Valentine say?"

Ginny blushed. "It was so embarrassing. I had originally wrote — as part of the bet was that it had to be really cheesy — that *his eyes were as green as a fresh pickled toad and his hair as dark as a blackboard*. But that was all I could come up with. The twins added more to it. So when the dwarf cornered Harry, the Valentine sang: *His eyes are as green as a fresh pickled toad, his hair as dark as a blackboard. He's really divine, I wish he was mine, the hero who conquered the Dark Lord.*"

Sirius busted out laughing, the sound coming out as a deep rumble from his chest. "Oh that's rich! Poor Harry! I bet he was beet red."

Ginny smirked. "Maybe a little. I know I definitely was. I was

embarrassed, but I saw that Harry had the diary that day. I panicked. The only thing I could think of was what if Tom told Harry all of my secrets. So, I stole it back, and soon it was happening again. The blank spots were back, and I was getting sick. I was pale all of the time. Fred and George began to hover a bit, and Percy was forcing me to take Pepper-Up potions. Then, Tom forced me to write my own message on the wall and to go down into the Chamber. I know now that it was some form of possession. Well, he came out of the diary. He was able to take corporeal form because I had fed my soul to him, unintentionally yes, but I had. He was touching me ... telling me that I was pretty little girl. He was about sixteen years old. He did ... well, it doesn't matter now, but I learned a lot of things that year; things that I have no business understanding now, sexual things, violence, hatred ... it filled me. The last thing I remember is him fully coming out of the diary, talking to me, tort- well stuff, and then I was unconscious. When I woke up, Harry was kneeling over me, covered in blood and dirt, Dumbledore's phoenix was sitting on his shoulder, the diary had a huge bloody fang through it, Harry had a sword in his hand, along with the old Sorting Hat and there was a huge dead basilisk. I burst into tears. I told him everything and that I had done it. He told me that it wasn't my fault, and that everything would be okay. When I was in the hospital, Bill teased me about it. He told me that I could never do anything half-way. He said that I had to go get the boy that I had a crush on to rescue me. I dream about the Chamber a lot. It was just that I haven't had the dream in so long, and now ... I don't know what brought it up."

Sirius nodded. He reached over to squeeze her hand gently. "I'm sorry, honey, that you would have to go through something like that. I'm also very honoured that you would tell me. Can I ask though, how did you find out that Tom Riddle was Voldemort?"

"I didn't, but when Harry was telling Dumbledore the story, I found out. I guess Tom told Harry that his name was Tom Marvolo Riddle, and when he switched the letters around it spelt I am Lord Voldemort." Ginny shivered. "I was possessed. It was a creepy feeling and really scary."

"I can imagine." He squeezed her hand lightly again.



The two of them sat in silence for a few moments until Ginny spoke.

“Sirius, what was your nightmare about?”

Sirius hesitated and then he swallowed. “Well, I guess it is only fair that I tell you, after what you just told me.” He took a sip of his hot chocolate. “It’s about the night that ... well, the night I thought Lily and James died. I’m never going to forget it or forgive myself.” When Ginny only looked at him oddly, he continued. “James wanted to use me as Secret Keeper when they went into hiding. I agreed at first, because I knew that I would die rather than betray my best friend. But then I thought, well, Voldemort is going to know it’s me and come straight after me, so why not throw him off? I convinced James to choose Peter instead. I thought that Voldemort would never think that James and Lily would choose such a weak rat like him. James and Lily agreed and they did the charm. What we didn’t know, was that Peter was secretly a Death Eater. He went straight to Voldemort and told him where James and Lily were hiding with baby Harry. He waited a little over a year to do it. To this day, I have never known why. That night, I was doing my check-ups on people. When I arrived at Peter’s flat, no one was there. There didn’t seem to be any sign of struggle, but I was still worried, and I was too late. When I arrived at the house in Godric’s Hollow, it was destroyed, and James and Lily were ... well, I thought they were dead. Hagrid was there, soothing Harry. I couldn’t believe that Harry was alive. But, I knew that I needed to find Peter, that something wasn’t right ... How did Voldemort find them? I always wake up aching, and now ... James is alive and I don’t know what hurts me more, to think that I thought that it was my fault that they were dead because I made a stupid mistake in judgment, or the fact that James has forgiven me for that mistake? Not to mention, my dreams still tend to be filled with memories of Azkaban.”

“It’s going to take some time to get over that, Sirius. Prison is a horrible place. I can’t imagine what you went through in there.”

Sirius nodded. “I think that I only stayed sane because I knew that I was innocent. But now that I’m here in the world again ... I can’t believe that both James and Lily survived. Lily’s gone now but ... I think that she would have forgiven me too and that’s comforting.”

"Lily sounds like she was wonderful and James is your best friend. How could he do anything else but forgive you?" Ginny asked.

Sirius nodded. "I don't know. Lily was wonderful. She was beautiful and she was so smart. James had a crush on her for ages, but she would never give him the time of day. She told him that he was a prat and that his ego was too big. She couldn't stand him. James never took any of it seriously; he just mooned over her, happily. Then, at the end of our sixth year he grew up. You know, stopped being a prat. He was more mature, and Lily started taking a second look at him. By the beginning of seventh year, they were together and they were inseparable. I loved Lily more than anything."

"I'm sure she would have forgiven you."

Sirius smiled. "I think she would have too. Remus and I used to flirt with her all the time. Just playful flirting, mostly because it pissed James right off. We called her Lily-Love. I used to always propose to her and tell her to come to Tahiti with me. She'd just laugh and kiss my cheek and tell me she'd see what James thought. She was like a sister to me. I can't imagine how it was for James to lose her. She was his everything. He's suffered so much."

Ginny smiled. "Yeah, James has suffered a lot, but so has Harry."

Sirius nodded, and then he tilted his head, giving Ginny a knowing smile. "You still have a crush on Harry, don't you?"

Ginny's mouth fell open in surprise. "Don't be ridiculous. I got over him ages ago."

Sirius grinned as he watched her carefully. "You love him, don't you?"

"What?"

"You love him. Yeah, you got over the crush and fell in love instead. Am I right?"

Ginny shook her head furiously. "N-n-no."

Sirius grinned. "You're not very convincing. Don't worry; I'm not going to tell him. But I think that you're in love with Harry."

"Well, I'm not. We're just friends! I got over Harry way before he rescued me from the Chamber. He's my friend, one of my best friends."

Sirius nodded. "That may be, but it doesn't change your feelings does it?"

Ginny sighed, she felt comfortable with Sirius in a way she really only felt with Bill and Charlie. She grinned as she shook her head at him. "I told Hermione that I'm over him. And I am over him. It was a crush. He doesn't like me that way. I'm just Ron's little sister in his eyes."

Sirius grinned. "Well, that's his loss isn't it? Besides, he's probably just starting to look at girls. Don't lose hope. But I think he'll come to his senses eventually."

Ginny glanced over at him with surprise. "Why would you say that? We're just friends."

Sirius grinned. "Because the Potters tend to like red heads. Give him time, Gin."

She smiled at him, very pleased by the quick shortening of her name. To her, that was what people called her when they were close. "Well, we'll see. Right now, I think it's better if you would get it through your thick skull that we're just friends."

He grinned at her and decided that it was best to change the subject. "Hey, whatever you say, Gorgeous."

She laughed. "Gorgeous?"

He shrugged. "Well, you are. Hey, want to play a game of chess?"

Ginny smiled. "I'd love to. Besides, we've got hours until Mum wakes everyone up for the Cup. I don't think I can go back to sleep."

Sirius grinned. "My thoughts exactly."

By the time that morning finally came, neither Ginny or Sirius had gotten much sleep. They had stayed up all night playing chess and talking about anything and everything. They had really become close in a short amount of time.

When everyone else woke up the following morning, it was still dark outside. Once they were dressed and fed they stumbled out to the hidden portkey, led by Mr. Weasley. Sirius had made himself a dog by now and he and Foolish ran happily in circles around them.

They arrived at the campground and set up the two tents that Mr. Weasley had borrowed from someone at work named Perkins. The main tent had enough beds for Mr. Weasley, Harry, Ron, Fred, George, Bill, Charlie, Remus, and James. Snuffles got to sleep on the floor as he had to stay in his dog form. The smaller tent was for Ginny and Hermione and to Ginny's delight, Foolish. The dog had fallen in love with her and was more than pleased to snuggle close as she slept. Hermione wasn't big on Foolish, as she was not much of a dog person, but she was pleased that he didn't seem to want to chase Crookshanks.

After walking around and running into Dean Thomas, Seamus Finnigan, Ernie Macmillan, Cho Chang (which had caused Harry to blush and stutter) and Oliver Wood, Harry decided to buy a pair of Omnioculars – something specially used to watch the Quidditch game. He bought a pair for Ron, Hermione, and Ginny as well. Then he jumped in excitement as they finally headed to the game.

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Viktor Krum was the talk of the tent at the end of the game. He was the seeker from Bulgaria and he had been brilliant. Harry was dying to try out some of the moves that he had done on his Firebolt. But later on that evening, Harry was woken up by James, and he could hear the screams.

Death Eaters were playing around the campsite, torturing the muggle

campground owners as well as some wizarding families. They scrambled into the woods as the adults took off after the Death Eaters, hoping to stop them. The Dark Mark was cast into the sky, very near where the children were standing.

Once the chaos had subsided and the adults realized that Harry, Ron, and Hermione had not cast the Dark Mark, it was discovered that Winky, a house elf, had been found with a wand beneath the Mark. Barty Crouch's own house elf to be exact. He gave her clothes and set her free, causing her to scream and whine in panic and shame. Hermione was horrified by the treatment of the house elf, but the thoughts were pushed from everyone's mind as they realized that the Dark Mark was the sign of death for Voldemort. He placed it over homes after he killed the people inside of them.

They arrived back at the Burrow and found Mrs. Weasley in a panic. Apparently, a reporter named Rita Skeeter had written, in the *Daily Prophet*, that people had been killed at the World Cup and Mrs. Weasley was terrified since she had not heard from any of them.

Mr. Weasley managed to calm her down, and James suggested taking Harry, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Fred, and George into Diagon Alley for their school things. Mrs. Weasley was grateful for this and gave James a bag of money for her children. So the seven of them flooded to Diagon Alley that afternoon and left Bill, Charlie, Percy, Remus, Sirius, and Mr. Weasley at the Burrow with the daunting task of trying to calm down Mrs. Weasley.

James grinned at Ginny when they arrived at Diagon Alley a few hours later. "Ginny, I noticed that Foolish has taken quite a liking to you."

Ginny smiled warmly at him. "He's such a sweetie, Mr. Potter, you and Harry are lucky to have him. How old is he?"

"Foolish? He's nine years old now. And please, call me James."

Ginny grinned. "I always wanted a dog, but it's nice to know that I can play with Foolish every now and again. I've been working on trying to convince Mum to let me get a cat. I don't have a pet of my own and

this way I can bring the cat to school with me. But no dice yet, we'll see."

James laughed. "You'll get one eventually, don't worry. I'm sure that she can't hold out forever. I wanted to thank you earlier for what you did for Padfoot."

Ginny smiled. "It was no problem. I wasn't lying. I did say that I didn't believe Sirius did any of those terrible things to Harry. I think that he's a nice guy and he sure makes a handsome dog."

James smirked. "That he does. He told me you two had quite a long talk before the Cup."

"We did. Nightmares tend to bring people together."

James smiled. "That they do. Well, let's go catch up with the others and figure out what the hell you all need."

Ginny laughed. "Good idea."

"Harry, how much new stuff do you need?" James called out.

Harry fell back a bit more towards his father as he glanced at the parchment. "Just some books and ingredients and ... dress robes?"

James grinned. "Yeah, I believe you will need those. Do you all need dress robes?"

Everyone nodded but Ginny. "I don't. It must be only for fourth years and above."

James nodded. "Alright, let's get this show on the road."

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Ron grinned broadly as they stepped into his bedroom later on that evening. "It was cool of your Da to help us pick out dress robes."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I kind of like the bottle-ink green ones that

Hermione and Ginny picked out. She and Hermione ganged up on me, though Da did tell me to get them too.”

“I’m just glad that I was shopping with your Da ... Mum would have made me get maroon! I hate maroon! But now, thanks to him I have black.”

Harry laughed. “Well, Fred and George picked out baby blue and neon orange ... now they’re going to stand out.”

Ron grinned. “I think that was their goal.”

They laughed as they sorted through their things. Once Ron made sure that his bags were only filled with his things, he nodded.

“Got it.”

Harry grinned. “Guess so. Well, I better go then. I’ll see you tomorrow at the train station.”

Ron nodded. “See ya.”

Harry gathered up his bags and headed downstairs where James was waiting. Remus and Sirius had already taken Foolish back to Potter Manor. “Okay, I’m ready.”

They said goodbye to everyone, thanked Mr. and Mrs. Weasley for their hospitality, and flooed back to Potter Manor. Harry put everything in his room. He came back downstairs, asking if he could work on his animagus transformations again.

Sirius agreed to help him, as James had to go into the Ministry. The Ministry was in chaos ever since the World Cup and had everyone working extreme overtime. Harry tried to focus on changing his left hand into the tip of a phoenix wing. The summer was over, after tonight, and he still had nothing. His frustration must have been showing because Sirius sighed.

“Harry, listen to me you can’t get frustrated, you just have to concentrate hard and ... let the magic flow through you. I know that

you can do this.”

Harry nodded. He took three deep calming breaths and closed his eyes. He concentrated on his magic, on that heat and intense power within him and then he imagined his left arm as a red and gold phoenix wing. His left arm tingled and danced and when he opened his eyes, he had a wing.

“I did it!” He exclaimed.

Sirius grinned. “Shit, you did do it! Damn it, Harry, that’s brilliant! I think I should be jealous! It took me damn near to six months to get that far! Try to turn it back now.”

Harry nodded. He brought back the concentration and did the same thing as before but when he looked at his arm he still had a wing. He tried again and again and finally after the fifth attempt, his arm was back.

Sirius beamed at him. “Bloody brilliant, mate. Try it again.”

Harry grinned. “Slave driver!”

A few minutes later, he had a wing again.

“Try your other arm now.” Sirius suggested.

Harry nodded and he concentrated on his right arm. But after two hours he still only managed to have one wing. He groaned in frustration.

Sirius only shook his head. “Don’t worry about it, Harry! You’re already way ahead of both James and I. It took us six months to get where you are and you’ve done it in less than two. I think that that’s enough for today.”

Harry nodded and then he grinned when James walked into the room. “Da! Look I did it!” When James looked up, Harry changed his left arm into a phoenix wing.



James grinned. "Bloody hell, Harry that's amazing! I'm proud of you! It took Sirius and I six months!"

Harry grinned. "I know, he told me."

"Can you change anything else?"

"No, only my one arm."

"You'll get it, don't worry. Listen, I'm going to give you a small hint of something that's happening at Hogwarts. I don't want to ruin the surprise though. But there's an important event happening at Hogwarts this year. It involves Hogwarts and the two other schools of magic; Durmstrang Institute and Beauxbatons Academy." James explained.

"What kind of event?" Harry asked.

James smiled. "An important one. I'm not going to tell you anything else; I think that you can find out with the rest of the school. Now why don't you head on up to bed and make sure that you finish packing your trunk."

Harry nodded. "Okay, but can't you give me a little hint?"

James shook his head. "Nope, not even a little one. Goodnight, Harry."

Harry headed up to bed, wondering what kind of important event that involved all three schools of magic would be happening at Hogwarts.

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## Chapter 15: A Tournament and a Date

**Author's Notes:** please tell me what u think of this one!! please review!! newly edited i dont own the words to the lovely sorting hat song - JKR is one of a kind! thanks chell!

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## **Chapter XV – A Tournament and a Date**

The train ride back to school was not too eventful, other than the normal visit from Malfoy and his goons not too much had happened. The only thing that bothered Harry was that Malfoy knew what this event was. This event that James had casually mentioned and then refused to comment on just because he had known it would drive Harry crazy, which it had; but it hadn't truly bothered him until he realized that Malfoy knew what the event was all about. Especially because Malfoy just had to comment on the fact that both James and Mr. Weasley worked at the Ministry but they didn't know what the event was. He actually had the nerve to mention that their jobs weren't high enough on the scale for such important information to be shared with them. He ignored him as much as he could and by the time that they arrived at Hogwarts and were seated in the Great Hall, he was anxious to hear what was happening.

He watched as the First Years stood in a line at the front and the Sorting Hat began to sing:

*A thousand years or more ago  
When I was newly sewn,  
There lived four wizards of renown,  
Whose names are still well known:  
Bold Gryffindor, from wild moor,  
Fair Ravenclaw, from glen,  
Sweet Hufflepuff, from valley broad,  
Shrewd Slytherin, from fen.  
They shared a wish, a hope, a dream,  
They hatched a daring plan  
To educate young sorcerers  
Thus Hogwarts School began.  
Now each of these four founders  
Formed their own house, for each  
Did value different virtues  
In the ones they had to teach.  
By Gryffindor, the bravest were  
Prized far beyond the rest;  
For Ravenclaw, the cleverest*

*Would always be the best;  
For Hufflepuff, hard workers were  
Most worthy of admission;  
And power-hungry Slytherin  
Loved those of great ambition.  
While still alive they did divide  
Their favourites from the throng,  
Yet how to pick the worthy ones  
When they were dead and gone?*

*'Twas Gryffindor who found the way,  
He whipped me off his head  
The founders put some brains in me  
So I could choose instead!  
Now slip me snug about your ears,  
I've never yet been wrong,  
I'll have a look inside your mind  
And tell where you belong!*

He was pleased to finally hear the Sorting Hat's song as he hadn't heard it since his first year due to circumstances beyond his control. He was surprised to realize that it was a different song but according to Hermione, the hat had a different one every year. He figured the hat had a boring life and Ron thought that the hat probably spent the entire year trying to come up with a new song to sing.

Finally, after a fantastic feast, Dumbledore stood to his feet and got the attention of the Great Hall. "Good evening. Now that we are all fed and watered, I have an interesting and very important announcement to make. For the first time in decades, Hogwarts will be hosting the Tri-Wizard Tournament."

Whispers began to float around the school as people began to look at each other wondering about the announcement. A tournament? What kind of tournament?

Dumbledore merely smiled as he continued on. "The Tri-Wizard Tournament is a competition between the three main schools of magic: Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Durmstrang

Institute, and the Beauxbatons Academy. Hogwarts will be hosting the tournament this year. Students who fulfill the requirements to participate in the tournament will be arriving with their headmasters and headmistresses around Halloween. More about the tournament will be discussed then. For now, let me –”

He stopped talking as the doors of the Great Hall burst open and Harry recognized the creepy form of Alastor Mad-Eye Moody. His wooden leg clunked as he walked and his magical eye moved eerily in its socket. He wondered briefly why he was here. He remembered his Da telling him years ago that Moody had retired. As he looked at the scars on Moody’s body, he shivered. He was glad that his Da had never been injured that badly on the job. James only had a few small scars on his chest and back, nothing major, and those were mostly faded now.

Ginny leaned over to him. “I wonder why Moody is here?”

Harry shrugged. “I dunno. Da never said anything about it.”

Ron turned at the sound of their conversation. “Well, there is one member of staff missing at the Head Table.”

“Well, our missing guest has made it.” Dumbledore replied with a smile as he turned his attention back to the silent hall. “Ladies and gentlemen, this is Professor Moody. He will be the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher this year.”

No one applauded this news like usual, instead, all of the students continued to stare at Moody in fascination and fear. After a few minutes of silence, Dumbledore cleared his throat.

“Yes, well, off to bed now. Get a good night sleep before classes.”

Harry headed upstairs to bed with the rest of the school, turning to Ron as they left the Great Hall. “So what kind of tournament do you think it’s going to be?”

Ron shrugged. “I’m not sure. Probably some challenging tasks based on how advanced and how much magic you know. Do you think that

they'll be dangerous?"

"Probably. What do you reckon? Should we enter?"

"Harry James Potter and Ronald Bilius Weasley!" Ginny exploded from his right. "Don't you dare even consider entering this tournament! Mum would have a fit!"

Harry grinned; he hadn't expected the sudden lecture from little Ginny Weasley. "Hey, if we can enter we will. Besides, we don't even know all the details yet; maybe we won't be old enough or advanced enough or something?"

Ginny seemed to take this in stride and she nodded. "That's true ... I just don't want a letter from Mum complaining about how I didn't stop you two from doing something stupid ... besides, I can only imagine what Fred and George are going to do." She shuddered. "This is right up their alley."

Ron grinned. "Aw, Gin, don't worry about it. Everything will get worked out." He yawned. "I'm heading up to bed now, night."

Harry gave Ginny a casual wave as he yawned and followed Ron up to the fourth year boys' dormitories. Yeah, everything would work out.

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Classes proceeded pretty much normally but Harry found himself still dreading the classes that he had with Professor Trelawney. They were boring and much too predictable. Both Harry and Ron had never once actually done their homework for that particular class, they just guessed on it. They knew that Professor Trelawney was very happy with their work as long as they predicted gruesome deaths or horrible tragedies to happen to themselves and to the people that they knew. A few of their favourites were accidental drowning, suffocating, being stamped by a rampaging hippogriff, and being shot with a muggle gun. If Trelawney thought that their predictions were odd, she never commented but instead lapped them up. Divination was definitely Harry's least favourite subject, well, other than Potions and History of Magic.

Potions was alright, but Snape was pretty upset with Harry. Last year, he had finally gotten the hang of the class and had managed to tap into that great potions skill that his mother had possessed and that his father was pretty average at. Harry had not once messed up a potion in any way, shape, or form and he knew that the Acceptable grades he'd been scraping up were not from his lack of skill. Hermione was especially against his grades because she could see that his potions were just as good as her own, if not better, and yet she was receiving Outstandings and he was not. Hermione kept insisting that he should go to Professor Dumbledore and complain about Snape. Harry thought that he had enough trouble with Snape as it was. So Harry shrugged it off, as he knew that Snape was not going to be changing his tune any time soon. Besides, when it came to the important grades like O.W.L.s and N.E.W.T.s, it wasn't going to be Snape marking his skill and that was all he was concerned with.

History of Magic was a complicated topic for Harry because he truly enjoyed history. He remembered reading stories and myths and legends about many of the things that they discussed in class such as Merlin, goblin rebellions, the Druids; all things that he knew to be very fascinating subjects ... unless you were taught by Professor Binns. The lessons were so dull that he could barely manage to keep his eyes open. But when he had complained about it years ago to his Da, James had suggested sucking on sugar quills (this was apparently how he had paid attention in that class when he had attended Hogwarts). Harry found that it did indeed work out well and he was able to make good notes on the subjects at hand without being bored to tears, well, at least not as bored as usual. Ron, on the other hand ... continued to snore loudly during almost every class – he was like clockwork. But, between Harry and Hermione he stayed on top of things.

Herbology was interesting enough. Professor Sprout always had some new and interesting type of plant to show to the class. Harry liked it even more knowing that Neville was so good at it. Neville was always willing to explain things or help out when Harry was confused or uncertain. Harry also tended to enjoy it more knowing that the mandrakes they had looked after and taken care of in their second year were the cause of saving Hermione's life, as well as the other

students that had been petrified. He didn't think that he would ever forget the Devil's Snare when they were searching for the Stone, not to mention the Whomping Willow. Now that he thought about, he realized that every big event that he had ever been involved in at school had somehow involved a plant.

Charms with Professor Flitwick was definitely one of Harry's favourite classes. Since Charms could be an extremely hectic and chaotic subject to teach – what with trying to levitate things, summon things, tickle things, etc. – that Harry, Ron, and Hermione found it especially good for talking about anything they needed to discuss as everyone was always so busy that no one bothered to listen in or lecture them. The other thing about Charms class was that because Harry had been taught the basic elements of wandless magic as a child he could already do most of the simple charms like summoning and levitating ... except he still had to learn how to do them with his wand. For some reason, learning with the wand after he could already do it without it was a lot more difficult than it should be.

Care of Magical Creatures was always an interesting class as Hagrid was running it. However, some of the creatures that Hagrid liked were not creatures that others would consider normal creatures (Aragog, Buckbeak, Fluffy, and Norbert for example) to be showing in class, or for most people to even want contact with. But that's one of the reasons that Hagrid stood out from everyone else. He also happened to still be one of Harry's favourite people, no matter how weird his lessons happened to be. Though, Harry was still dreading class at the moment because of these Blast-Ended Skrewts that Hagrid was showing them, not to mention the Flubberworms from last year. He still shuddered when he thought about them and how boring they were.

Ancient Runes was surprisingly a lot of fun. They touched base on a lot of historical legends and myths that muggles even knew a lot about such as the Druids and the ruins in Ireland and England; the myth of Merlin; the sword of Excalibur; hieroglyphics from the ancient Egyptians. They were also delving into many other ancient languages and cultures such as the Mesopotamians, goblins, trolls, giants, house elves, and other creatures and ancient people. Once they had studied the past of that particular subject, they would look at the

runes, which were symbols used to make a language. Professor O'Bryan would teach them how to interpret the symbols, then they would read documents or stories or anything else that had been written in that text. Hermione, as usual, went above and beyond in that class, even writing most of her homework in the runic symbols, as most of the essays had to be written in them. Harry thoroughly enjoyed the class. Not to mention the fact that Professor O'Bryan was extremely pretty, not that he noticed such things of course.

Defence Against the Dark Arts was definitely becoming an interesting class this year. Mad-Eye Moody was almost a dark and disturbing teacher himself. He had seen and done almost everything. Everyone was talking about him, his skills, and the way that he knew things. By the time that Harry made it into his classroom he was curious. And to his surprise, Moody had started the lesson with the Unforgivables. Harry had seen that flash of green light that had been used to try to kill his parents and him. He had been left thinking about that most of the days afterwards. He wasn't sure if he felt better for knowing exactly how he could have died, or not.

Transfiguration was something that Harry was beginning to view with an entirely new attitude since he had begun trying to be an animagus. James had suggested that he talk to Professor McGonagall about learning and show her how far he had progressed that way he would have someone to help him when he was practicing at school. After two weeks into the new term, Harry finally decided to talk to her about it. He hadn't told Ron, Hermione, or Ginny about him learning how to be an animagus yet but he wanted to discuss it with Professor McGonagall a bit more. Harry also wanted to talk to her about his potion having four animals when James and Sirius told him that he was only supposed to have one.

So after class one afternoon, Harry stayed in his desk as the class cleared out telling Ron and Hermione that he wanted to talk to McGonagall about something and that he would talk to them later. Once the room was empty, McGonagall glanced up at him from her desk.

"Can I help you with something, Potter?"



Harry nodded as he walked over to her. "Professor, last year you learnt that my Da, Sirius, and Peter Pettigrew had all become illegal animagi while they were at school here?"

McGonagall nodded as she set down her quill and took her glasses off. "Yes. I was thoroughly impressed that they had learned how to by themselves and without any type of instruction. Especially when they were students here."

"Yes, well ... I was talking to my Da about it and I asked him last summer if I could become an animagus. He promised to teach me once school ended, so I've been studying a bit since the beginning of the summer." Harry explained.

McGonagall's eyebrow lifted in surprise. "You've been studying to become an animagus?"

Harry nodded. "Da taught me the elemental wandless magic when I was younger. He said that a lot of parents didn't bother with it anymore because they had wands, but he thought that it would be better if I learned how to control my magic without a wand first. So, since I've been doing that since I was six years old, Da thought I could learn without a wand."

"Have you learnt anything so far, Harry?"

"It's hard work," Harry replied with a grin. "But I am getting somewhere. I was wondering, though, if I could ask you a couple of questions about it. Da suggested that I talk to you."

McGonagall gave Harry one of her rare smiles. "Of course. James Potter was one of my prized students. What would you like to know, Harry?"

He grinned. "Well, we made the potion and when I drank it ... I saw four animals. Da and Sirius said that that's weird because I should have only seen one. So I was wondering, well ... since I saw four animals, does that mean that I can have four animagus forms?"

McGonagall nodded. "It would mean that, yes. It is ... odd for

someone to be shown four animals but it's not impossible. Many great wizards of the time had more than one animagus form. Merlin himself had five and Professor Dumbledore has three that I know of. So yes Harry, you should be able to become all four. May I ask what animals you were shown?"

"I was shown a lion, a wolf, an owl, and a phoenix. We decided to start with the phoenix form."

"Tell me what you've done so far, what they've told you to do."

Harry nodded. "They mostly just told me to concentrate my magic the way that I do when I'm doing wandless magic and to picture whatever part of my body that I'm trying to change to look exactly like it would on that particular animal."

"That's right. Do you remember from class what the four most vital parts of the body are to change and in what order?"

"The two arms, left to right, the head and then the torso."

McGonagall smiled. "Exactly. The trick to becoming an animagus is that you must successfully change your entire body piece by piece before trying the full transformation. Once you have achieved those four vital parts the legs are pretty easy. After that, the transformation should come easily for you."

Harry grinned. "Well, the other thing is that right before school started I succeeded in changing my left arm into a phoenix wing. Da and Sirius were really impressed and said that it took them almost six months to do that and I did it in two."

McGonagall looked impressed as well. "Will you show me?"

Harry nodded. He concentrated on his left arm and began to imagine it as a beautiful, red and gold wing. Seconds later his arm was replaced with a beautiful phoenix wing.

"Wow! That's wonderful Harry!" McGonagall replied, obviously really very impressed. "If you managed to do that in less than two months

then yes, that is amazing.”

Harry changed his arm back and then grinned at her. “Thanks, Professor. The other thing that I wanted to ask you is that since I’m at school and cannot meet with Da and Sirius, Da suggested asking you if you could give me an hour or so a week to practice. He doesn’t want me to do it alone, but wants to have someone there to help me and critique me as I go along. Would you help me?”

McGonagall smiled warmly. “Of course, I can think of nothing better than helping you do this. It is a very hard skill to learn and since you are only fourteen, and yet somehow managed a vital part of the process already, I think that I would enjoy helping you along to the full transformation.”

Harry grinned broadly. “Thanks Professor! Um, also, I haven’t told anyone else about this yet. I’m kind of keeping it a secret. I also don’t want anyone to know about my form, legally I mean, not with me being who I am ... and Da is worried about Death Eaters and ... well, Voldemort...”

McGonagall nodded. “I understand. Once you get all four animals done I think that you probably should register one of them ... but keep the other three forms as a secret for yourself. That way, you are not technically breaking any laws.”

Harry nodded. “Alright. Thanks.”

“Why don’t we start with our first lesson tonight at eight o’clock? We’ll meet in my office.”

Harry grinned. “That would be great, thanks again.”

As he hurried out of the classroom to head to dinner, McGonagall only smiled. He truly was a remarkable boy.

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Now that he had more animagus lessons lined up, his days seemed to be going more quickly. It was a few days after his talk with

McGonagall that he was rushing through the hall to the common room to throw his book bag there before dinner when he bumped right into Cho Chang, knocking her to the ground.

“Oh, Cho! I’m sorry, here let me help you,” he replied as he jumped to his feet and began to collect her things for her.

Cho gave him a dirty look. “You should watch where you’re going.”

Harry nodded. “I know, I’m sorry. I was thinking about all this work that I had to do and I ... well I wasn’t paying attention.”

She smiled and Harry only just caught himself from sighing out loud. She was so pretty. “It’s alright, I know what you mean about work. It’s my O.W.L. year, you know? The professors have just swamped us with work.”

He grinned. He was standing here, having a real conversation with Cho, he couldn’t believe it. “Yeah, well I don’t have O.W.L.s until next year but they’ve already started hammering us about how important they are.”

Cho nodded. “Yeah, I can only imagine how hard they’re going to work us when N.E.W.T.s start rising.” She shook her head. “Well, I better head to the library. It was nice talking to you, Harry.”

“Yeah, you too, bye.”

He watched her walk away, her last words echoing in his ears – *‘it was nice talking to you, Harry’* – had she really liked talking to him? She had looked so pretty with her long black hair pulled back into a ponytail. He sighed and as he walked away and almost walked headlong into Ginny.

“Whoa!” She exclaimed with a grin. “Harry, watch where you’re going!”

He grinned. “Hey Gin! Sorry, you’re the second person that I’ve done that to today.”

Ginny laughed. "Well, that should give you a hint then, eh? Listen, I wanted to talk to you anyway, do you have a minute?"

"Sure, what's up?" He asked, still thinking slightly of how pretty Cho was.

"What do you know about Michael Corner from Ravenclaw? He's in your year?"

Harry looked slightly taken aback by the question. "Corner?" He asked, trying to bring a picture of the guy to his mind.

Ginny nodded. "Yeah. He's got dark brown curly hair and bright blue eyes. He hangs around with Anthony Goldstein and Terry Boot."

Harry shrugged as he remembered who Corner was. "I don't know. He seems like a nice enough bloke. I think I have Transfiguration with him. Why?"

Ginny bit her bottom lip and flipped her hair over her right shoulder. "No reason, he's just ... he's nice."

Harry eyed her suspiciously for a minute. He wasn't buying that, after all, he wasn't THAT thick. "Define nice."

Ginny laughed. "He is nice. He started talking to me in the library earlier today, flirting more like it. He's cute and I was just wondering what you knew about him."

Harry couldn't picture her dating anyone and the word flirting had definitely caught him off guard. Little Ginny Weasley flirting? Well, okay, she was thirteen years old and not so little anymore but really that picture didn't seem to sit right in his mind. Ginny was definitely beginning to fill out in all of the right places ... after all, he wasn't blind and was hardly the only person to notice, but ... Ginny Weasley flirting? "Have you told Ron, Fred, or George about this?"

Ginny shook her head. "No, and I don't plan to! All three of them will just lecture me, or hex him to death, and as he hasn't done anything but talk to me, I don't think that he should be punished."

Harry sighed. She was right about that, besides he knew that she could take of herself. He had heard stories from her brothers about her Bat Bogey Hex. It seemed that all six of her brothers were dead scared of her when she was angry. "You're right about that. I won't say anything. Are you heading to dinner now?"

She nodded. "Yeah but I want to throw my bag in the common room first."

He grinned. "Alright, I'll go with you. I was heading down that way anyway."

She nodded. "So you said that I was the second person that you bumped into today, who was the first?"

Harry shrugged. "Cho Chang. She's a fifth year."

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, I know who she is. You like her, don't you?"

Harry glanced down at Ginny in surprise. No one knew that he had a crush on Cho, other than the Marauders, of course. "Where would you get an idea like that?"

Ginny laughed. "Girls know these things, Harry."

"What do you mean?"

Ginny shrugged. "Don't worry about it, it's a girl thing. She's very pretty."

He nodded. "Yeah, she is. I do like her."

Ginny grinned. "I don't think that she's seeing anyone right now, either. She was dating Roger Davies, but I think that they broke up a while ago."

"How do you know these things?"

She laughed. "Girls like to gossip, Harry, everywhere you go you hear

about everyone's business whether you want to or not. I also know that Cedric Diggory has a bit of a crush on her, as well."

Harry shrugged. "Well, I mean ... she's pretty, but I don't know ... I don't know if I want to go out with her or anything ... well okay, I suppose I would ... but I won't ask her out ... I don't think that I'm ready yet.'

Ginny smiled up at him sympathetically. "Don't worry about it, Harry. I don't think that she's ready for you yet either."

He didn't question what Ginny meant by that, as he was afraid to find out the answer. He stayed silent instead as they headed into the Great Hall. Harry noticed Hannah Abbott from Hufflepuff staring at him as they walked in. He gave her a small smile and saw her face light up. He wondered why she was looking at him. Did he have something on his face? He pushed the thought from his mind and ate his dinner happily. He was walking with Ron and Hermione back up to the common room after dinner when he heard someone call out his name. He turned around and saw Hannah standing there. He told his friends to go up to the common room without him and he walked over to her. She was pretty, he thought. She had shoulder length blonde hair and grey eyes.

"Hi, Hannah."

She grinned. "Hello, Harry, how are you?"

He shrugged and she sighed. "Okay, dreading going back to the common room. I got a bag full of homework today. I had Potions, Transfiguration and DADA, you?"

She smiled. "I've got a bit of homework, but I had an easier day. Herbology, Muggle Studies, and Charms."

He nodded. "Yeah, I'd say that's a bit better. So, what can I do for you?"

She smiled warmly at him and he grinned. She was really pretty and he wondered why he hadn't noticed before, but then again, his

attention had been filled mostly with Cho. "Actually, Harry, I was sort of wondering if you noticed the post of the next Hogsmeade weekend?"

Harry nodded. Her eyes were twinkling up at him and he wondered if she expected him to ask her to go with him. "It's next weekend." She smiled at him and he grinned, yeah she was pretty. "And I believe that there's another one on Halloween."

Hannah nodded. "It should be fun. I heard that they opened another store."

Harry grinned at her. "Yeah, would you like to go to Hogsmeade with me next weekend?"

Hannah grinned broadly. "I'd love too. I think that would be fun. What time do you want to meet?"

Harry shrugged. "Anytime works for me."

"How about around ten then? I'll meet you in the front hall." She suggested as she tucked a piece of her hair behind her ear.

Harry grinned. "That sounds great. I'll see you then. Goodnight, Hannah."

She smiled up at him. "Goodnight, Harry."

He watched her walk away and sighed. He had absolutely no idea why he had just done that. He had a crush on Cho not Hannah. Yet had he asked Cho out? No. He looked at her blonde hair as she walked away and grinned to himself ... but he did like Hannah. She was really pretty and he knew from classes that she was pretty smart. She was easy to talk to, as well. He grinned to himself; he would definitely have fun with her. Maybe it was for the best that he hadn't asked Cho out ... after all, now he got to test the waters a bit when it came to this dating game so he wouldn't make a complete fool of himself ... at least he hoped not. And Hannah seemed like the perfect person to start out his dating life. They were friends in a basic casual, classmate way and he was comfortable with her. She was obviously



interested in him and he found her to be really pretty, sweet, and smart; so no, he hadn't made a mistake. He was going to go to Hogsmeade with Hannah and he was going to enjoy himself.

He headed back to the Gryffindor common room, whistling.

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## **Chapter 16: The Goblet of Fire**

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XVI – The Goblet of Fire**

“Let me get this straight!” Ron exclaimed as he sat down next to Harry on the couch in the common room. “You just asked her to go to Hogsmeade with you, out of the blue? Since when did you even like Hannah Abbott?”

Harry shrugged. “What’s not to like? She’s pretty and she’s sweet and I’ve always been on friendly terms with her minus the whole heir of Slytherin fiasco in second year, but that was all of Hufflepuff House so I really can’t blame her for going along with the crowd, you know? I like her and she obviously likes me so why not give it a go?”

Hermione smiled warmly at Harry as Ron continued to look at him with a shell shocked expression on his face. “I think its sweet, Harry. Just ignore Ron, since he is obviously too immature to realize that dating is a normal part of life.”

Ron’s mouth dropped open. “What’s that supposed to mean, Hermione? I’m just surprised is all! I mean it was out of the blue for Harry to ask her out! So how the bloody hell does that make me immature?”

“It makes you immature because you can’t seem to wrap your peanut sized brain around the fact that Harry has a date and you don’t!”

“Well ... I ... that has nothing to do with it!”

Harry sighed and stood up, heading over to the other side of the common room where he could pull out his books. He took a seat next to Ginny and Colin. “Hey guys.”

Colin grinned. “Hey, Harry, those two at it again?”

Harry laughed. “I think that their arguments are going to be legendary.”

Ginny smiled. “So you asked out Hannah Abbott? I thought that you liked Cho?”

Harry shrugged. “I do, but I don’t know. She doesn’t seem interested in me. Besides, I like Hannah and she seems to like me as well. We’re only going to Hogsmeade.”

“I think it’s great. You’ll have fun, don’t worry.”

He nodded. “I have no idea what we’ll do, but I think it will be fun. But now the only thing I need to worry about is this potions essay.”

Ginny nodded. “Well, have fun with that one. Can I ask you a question about this DADA thing though?”

Harry turned to glance over at her homework. “Sure, what’s up?”

She pointed to the part that she was having trouble with on the page about grindelows; something about the paragraph in the textbook just wasn’t making sense to her. Harry quickly explained it, using some of the examples that Remus had given last year and she grinned in understanding. “Okay, that makes sense now. I’m kind of afraid to approach Moody, he gives me the creeps. Thanks.”

They both got back to work quickly after that. Harry only looked up briefly when Demelza Robbins, a first year who had become fast friends with Ginny and Colin took a seat at their table. Harry was half-way done his potions essay when Ron took a seat next to him. “Hey.”

Harry looked up and smirked. "Done with your argument?"

Ron grinned. "I think so."

Harry laughed. "I don't even know why you bother to argue with her. It's almost impossible to win and it really just takes a lot of time and energy, if you ask me."

Ron shrugged. "Because it's too hard not to argue with her. She always has to be right, about everything. It drives me crazy! Especially when I know she's wrong and she won't admit it. Now she's going on about spew and something to do with elf rights. That entire thing with Winky at the Cup really upset her."

Harry nodded. He knew all about S.P.E.W. or the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare. Hermione just didn't seem to understand that house elves liked to be enslaved. He thought that she had the right idea though as Dobby had been treated terribly. But Maddy and Mickey were part of the family at his house. He had tried to explain that to her but she didn't believe him. She had gone into a tangent about how they still cooked their food, cleaned their home, did their laundry and what did they get? Harry had just ignored her. Neither Maddy or Mickey wanted any wages. James gave them two days off a month, which was more than they could even bear, and one week off every year for them to go on a trip and spend some time with each other. Harry knew that even though they were used to that week off a year, they still protested when James mentioned it. House elves liked to work.

"Don't even mention spew to me, I tried to reason with her. I've got two house elves and I tried to explain that they are like part of my family but the fact that I have two house elves living at my home put two points against me. I couldn't even get a word in after that." Harry explained.

Ron sighed. "See? There's no reasoning with her." He pulled out his potions essay and groaned. "This is not what I want to be doing."

Harry laughed. "You can look at mine if you want, I just finished."

Ron grinned. "Excellent! Thanks Harry, I owe you one."

Harry just nodded as he pulled out his next piece of homework.  
"Yup."

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The day of the first Hogsmeade trip of the year, Harry stood in the boys' bathroom of his dormitory looking at himself in the mirror. He found that now that he was actually faced with going on his date, his nerves had kicked into full gear. What if he messed it up some how?

He glanced down at the black jeans and green jumper that he had chosen. He thought that he looked okay, it was casual, relaxed he thought and it didn't show that he was nervous. He ran a hand through his unruly black hair and sighed. It was now or never. He grabbed his money pouch and shoved it into his pocket before he headed down the stairs. Ginny was sitting on the couch and she turned at the sound.

"Hey, Harry, you look nice."

He grinned. "Thanks, so do you. Who are you waiting for?"

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Colin. I swear, he is worse than a girl when it comes to getting ready."

Harry laughed. "Well, maybe I'll catch you guys at the Three Broomsticks later. See you."

Ginny gave him an absent wave goodbye before she returned to the novel in her hand. Harry headed down into the entrance hall. It was still only ten to ten so when he didn't see her down there he was glad to know that he wasn't late. After about five minutes, she came down the stairs and he smiled at her.

She wore a long blue skirt and a white jumper. Her hair was half-pinned back out of her face and her purse was draped over her left shoulder. She looked very pretty. He smiled at her.

“Good morning.”

She smiled back. “Good morning. I haven’t kept you waiting long have I?”

Harry shook his head and said the first thing that came to his head, “It’s never a hardship to wait for a pretty girl.” After the words were out of his mouth he wondered where the hell they had come from.

She blushed a bit. “Thank you. Are you ready to go then?”

He nodded and offered his arm. She smiled and hooked her own arm through his. Harry grinned to himself; it wasn’t so hard after all. They stood in line for ten more minutes as Filch checked the list to make sure that no one was escaping who wasn’t allowed and then they were out into the village.

“So, where would you like to go first?” He asked.

Hannah shrugged. “No where in particular. But I do need to look for a birthday present for my mum. Her birthday is next weekend.”

Harry grinned. “Sure, got any ideas in mind?”

She shook her head. “No idea. Usually I’m pretty lucky and something just pops out at me. Do you have anywhere you want to go?”

“Not really. I was thinking about heading down to the Three Broomsticks around one and meeting up with a bunch of people, if you don’t mind?”

Hannah smiled warmly at him. “Not at all. I was actually going to suggest the same thing. I promised Suzie, Justin, Ernie, Wayne, and Megz that I would try to pop in.”

“I don’t think I know Wayne and Megz.”

“Wayne Hopkins and Meghan Jones, they’re in our year. Actually

both Megz and Wayne are going out right now. They make a good couple.” Hannah replied.

Harry nodded. “I see.”

“So who were you planning on meeting?” She asked.

Harry shrugged. “Ron and Hermione. Probably Neville, Ginny, Colin, Dean, Seamus, Lavender, Parvati and anyone else who happens to be in there. But I told Ron that I would try to stop by so that he and Hermione won’t kill each other. I swear that their arguments are going to be the death of me. If I didn’t have Ginny to keep me sane, I would knock their heads together.”

Hannah laughed. “I think that they like each other but just don’t know it.”

“Merlin help us if they do!”

She grinned and then she pulled him inside of Gladrags. They browsed through the store for a bit. Hannah was anxious to look at some of the new clothes. Harry could only grin as she pulled a few things out and went to go try them on. She modeled them as she came out. He was surprised to find that he was actually enjoying himself. She was pretty and the clothes she was modeling only made him realize that more. He grinned at her when she picked out two of the bazillion outfits she had tried on to actually buy and she had chosen a jumper for her mum in a cranberry colour.

After that, they went to Zonko’s and checked out a few products, neither one of them finding anything they wanted to buy. In Honeydukes, they bought some sweets and chocolate and then they stopped off in a bookstore in town. Hannah wasn’t really into reading, but Harry browsed the shelves and picked himself out two new novels to read. He also found a novel for both Ginny and Hermione so he bought them as well. He would add them to their Christmas presents. They visited the Owl Post next and Hannah used a special owl to send her present to her mum.

Then they headed down to the Shrieking Shack.

"This place has always been creepy to me," Hannah replied as they sat down on a bench off to the side of the gates blocking the house.

"I like it. I mean, there's not really anything in there and the house has been silent for years."

She shrugged. "It's still kind of scary though. I mean, something was in there at one time."

Harry grinned as he thought about Remus. "Yeah, I guess so."

He watched her as she looked up at the house. Her grey eyes were reflecting the sunlight coming through the trees. He was having a really good time and realized that he wanted to kiss her. He reached up and tucked a fly away piece of hair behind her ear. She turned to smile at him and he looked down at her mouth. Then he leaned down and kissed her lips softly.

The kiss wasn't exactly what he thought it would be. It was soft and almost sweet and short. But her lips had tasted of the chocolate frog that she had eaten when they had left Honeydukes. He smiled at her. He wanted to kiss her again, but he wasn't sure if he should or not. She licked her lips and he grinned.

"Hannah?"

"Hmm?" She asked, staring up at him with a soft almost dreamy smile on her face.

"I want to kiss you again. Is that alright?"

She smiled warmly. "That is very alright."

He grinned and brought his mouth to hers again. It was the same sweetness as before, but this time he experimented a bit, changing the angle and taking a deeper taste of her. And when she opened her mouth to allow for his tongue his only coherent thought was yeah, he liked kissing. He wasn't sure how long they stayed like that, sitting on the bench silently snogging but when they came up for air they just

grinned at each other.

Harry smiled at her and he glanced at his watch. "I guess we should head to the Three Broomsticks now."

She nodded. "Alright." She stood up and she slipped her hand into his and Harry grinned. Yeah, this dating thing wasn't so hard.

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After that day in Hogsmeade, Hannah and Harry were officially a couple. He enjoyed spending time with her. They did homework together in the library and walked to classes together whenever they could. He would carry her books and kiss her goodbye whenever he got the opportunity. And on the nights when they didn't particularly feel like studying, which was most of the time, they went into broom cupboards to snog some more.

Ron seemed to think that this was not the greatest thing. He complained, a lot, that he never got to see Harry anymore. But that wasn't true. Harry still spent a lot of time with Ron and Hermione. And when Harry had brought this fact up to Ginny, she just shrugged.

"I think he's jealous. After all, he doesn't have a snogging partner."

Harry had blushed at that statement. He then asked her about Michael. Ginny had told him that she still refused to go out with him. She wanted to get to know him a little better first. She said that Michael was being a sweetheart and a real gentleman. She was beginning to fall for him. Harry told her to give him a chance as the bloke was obviously fascinated by her. She had told him that in time she would. Harry hadn't pressed for anymore. Besides, his mind was strictly full of Hannah.

That was why, after one month of dating Hannah on the morning before Halloween, he found himself snogging her in a broom cupboard. She was in his lap as they kissed. He still thought that she tasted sweet and he enjoyed their snogging sessions immensely.

"Harry," she whispered against his mouth.



“Hmm?”

She smiled. “Shouldn’t we be heading into Hogsmeade now?”

He shrugged as he boldly slid his hands up her jumper and around to run his hands over her breasts in the cotton bra she wore. “Later.”

She laughed and then moaned as he rubbed his hands on her skin. “Harry ...”

He grinned at her and kissed her softly before removing his hands. “You’re right, let’s go.”

She smiled at him and carefully made sure that her hair was fixed before she left the cupboard with him.

Harry still couldn’t believe how well this relationship was going. He got along really well with Hannah and he enjoyed being with her. They were ... friends, he realized. Kissing friends, if he wanted to be specific, and not to mention friends that were a little bit ... friendlier. He remembered the first time, only one week ago, when Hannah had let him slip his hands under her shirt. He had been fascinated by the soft skin that he had discovered beneath there, the wonderful shape and feel so unlike his own. They had been exploring each other a bit in broom cupboards from time to time. And the first time that he had seen her without her shirt and only the soft cotton bra, he had nearly swallowed his tongue. But now, he knew what to expect. Because he was a fourteen-year-old-boy, his dreams had been sweaty ones ever since. Even if he hadn’t seen anything other than what was under her shirt. He slipped his hand into hers as they headed into the village.

“So, we’re supposed to find out all about this tournament today. I wonder how the other two schools are going to get here,” Harry replied.

Hannah shrugged. “I don’t know but I think that it will be exciting to watch. Cedric Diggory is going to try out from my house. I hope that he gets it. He’s a really great guy.”

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I know the Weasley twins are anxious to try out for it, as well. I think that it would be neat to try. Ron and I were debating but I mean, we're only fourteen so I don't know."

"I wouldn't try out if I were you," Hannah replied. "My Aunt Debbie told me all about the tournament. It's a competition with three incredibly dangerous tasks that test you in all of your magical abilities. She told me that no one from sixth year and below would be able to get through it. It's very advanced magic and a lot of people have died, which was one of the reasons why it hasn't happened in so many years."

"Wow, people have died in these things? Yeah, I definitely don't have any desire to die. Besides, it was just an idea I was throwing around I wouldn't actually enter. The last thing I need right now is to worry about a tournament."

Hannah smiled. "Good." She stood on her toes to kiss him softly. "Come on; let's go find a good place to snog."

Harry laughed. "I like the way that your mind works."

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The evening was rushed as the schools of Beauxbatons and Durmstrang arrived. The Beauxbatons carriage came flying through the sky and their headmistress was the largest woman that Harry had ever seen in his life. After he managed to get over the shock of Madame Maxime, he had to listen to Ron's shock over this beautiful blonde girl who Ron insisted was part Veela. Hermione was not too pleased with this.

The Durmstrang students arrived in a large ship that came up from the bottom of the lake. Professor Igor Karkaroff came out, making the way for a 'special student'. If Ron had been shocked by the sight of the blonde girl, he had practically been bouncing in his shoes when he realized that the special student was Bulgaria's own Viktor Krum. They had known he was young but to think that he was still in school! It was unbelievable!

Once the two schools had arrived, they all made their way back into the Great Hall for the feast and Dumbledore's announcement. The hall went silent when Dumbledore stood up to talk. He introduced the Goblet of Fire which it turned out would be the thing that was choosing the students who would participate. Only one student from every school. They had twenty-four hours to place their name in the goblet. Dumbledore explained that he was placing an Age Line around the perimeter, so that no one who was underage could get in. He explained about the new rules and regulations to prevent accidents or any deaths from occurring. He then dismissed the school as the buzzing of conversation picked up.

Ron turned to Harry and grinned. "Fred and George are thinking about doing an Aging Potion, what do you reckon?"

Harry shrugged. "Hannah and I were talking about it today and I don't want to enter. I mean, yeah I thought about it, eternal glory and all that jazz but it's dangerous. The last thing I need is to find myself in another dangerous situation."

Hermione grinned broadly from behind Harry. "Harry, that's wonderful! I think Hannah is having a good influence on you! It is the last thing you need and besides, Dumbledore did say that everyone had to be seventeen. I think it will be more fun to watch about the horrible tasks that they put the champions through."

Harry nodded. "Me too." He turned at the sound of his name and grinned at Hannah. "Hey."

She smiled. "Hi, I heard what Hermione said."

He grinned. "Oh yeah? And what do you think? Are you having a good influence on me?"

She laughed and threw her arms around his neck to kiss him softly. "Definitely! Goodnight, Harry."

"Goodnight."

He watched her walk away and grinned to himself, yeah, the last

thing he wanted was to be in this tournament.

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The next day went by achingly slow. Everyone was anxiously waiting to find out who the champions would be. Harry spent the day with Hannah. They spent most of the day snogging in broom cupboards, much to Harry's enjoyment. But finally it was time for the feast. Normally, Harry would have enjoyed the Halloween feast but he was too curious. He had known that Fred and George had tried the aging potion that morning and it hadn't worked ... though they had sprouted twin silver beards not unlike Dumbledore's. They seemed to be over it now and were cheering on Angelina Johnson.

Harry wished her luck as well. She would be a brilliant champion and he couldn't think of anyone else from Gryffindor who deserved it more. As Dumbledore stepped up to the podium the hall went silent. All of the candles went out and nothing was glowing except the Goblet of Fire on the pedestal at the front.

A piece of parchment flew out of the goblet and the entire hall held its breath ... then ...

"From the Beauxbatons Academy, Fleur Delacour."

Applause broke out as the beautiful blonde that Ron had been fascinated with made her way to the front and into the back room. A second piece of parchment came out.

"From the Durmstrang Institute, Viktor Krum."

Applause broke out again, louder this time but probably because he was a famous Quidditch player. Then the third parchment came out.

"From the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Cedric Diggory."

The roar from the Hufflepuff table was unbelievable as they cheered Cedric on, but Harry couldn't blame them. Hufflepuff rarely won anything and this was their chance to prove themselves. The rest of

the school applauded as well as Cedric made his way up to the front with Fleur and Viktor.

Dumbledore smiled at the students now. "Well, now that we have our three champions it is time to fully explain the rules. Each student will have to face three incredibly dangerous and challenging tasks. The first one will take place in November, the second in February, and the final in June. The champions are exempt from end of school exams and will be –"

He stopped talking and his eyes glanced at the goblet. The entire school was now focused on the same spot as Dumbledore.

"What's happening?" Ron asked.

Harry shrugged. "I dunno. The champions have all been picked now so what else does the goblet have to do?"

Hermione shook her head quietly. "Something's not right. Look at Dumbledore; even Crouch and Bagman are at a loss, confused even."

Another piece of parchment flew out of the goblet and into Dumbledore's hands. He stared at it for a minute as the hall waited in silence and then he spoke.

"Harry Potter."

Harry stared up at the head table in shock. He hadn't entered. How had his name gotten in? He wasn't even of age. He turned to look at his friends but they were all looking at him in shock. "I didn't put my name in." He said quietly, but no one answered him.

"Mr. Potter, please come up here."

He gulped as he made his way up to the front. There was no applause this time and he felt like he was making the walk down Death Row. When he finally approached Dumbledore he merely pointed to the back room where the other champions had gone. Harry stepped into the room and waited patiently.

A few seconds later Dumbledore, Snape, McGonagall, Karkaroff, Maxime, Crouch, and Bagman came into the room. They were arguing. Karkaroff and Maxime were accusing Dumbledore of cheating and they were insisting on two champions from each of their schools as well. Crouch was telling them that this wasn't possible because the Goblet had sealed itself. Dumbledore then demanded of Harry how his name had gotten into the goblet.

"I didn't put my name in, sir." Harry replied.

Moody nodded as he stepped into the room. "He didn't Dumbledore, there's no way that a fourteen-year-old wizard would have done that. Only someone with a strong knowledge of advanced dark magic could have done so. They must have placed him under a fourth school and then confunded the goblet into thinking there were four schools rather than three."

Karkaroff growled. "Well, you've sure put a lot of thought into that, Alastor!"

Moody shrugged. "It was once my job to think like dark wizards, Igor."

Dumbledore nodded. "Enough. Bartiemus, what shall we do?"

Crouch sighed as he ran a finger over his pencil-thin moustache. "There is nothing that we can do. The Goblet of Fire is a bindingly legal magical contract; the boy will have to compete."

McGonagall shook her head in denial. "Crouch, he can't! He's much too young."

Crouch shrugged. "Nothing can be done. There are now four champions."

Harry gulped. "C-can't I refuse?"

Bagman shook his head. "No, you're a champion now."

Dumbledore sighed. "Alright, then he will compete as there is nothing

else we can do. Harry, Cedric, why don't you head back to your houses? I believe that you have people who will want to celebrate with you. You will all be given instructions when the time comes closer. Goodnight."

Harry headed out of the room with Cedric, his mind on what Moody had said. Had someone really wanted him in the tournament that badly? Why? For him to get killed and not make it look like murder?

"So, we're playing against each other again?"

Harry nodded. "I suppose."

"How did you get your name in the goblet, I mean, just between me and you?" He asked.

"I didn't. I wasn't lying in there; I never put my name in."

Cedric nodded but Harry could tell that he didn't believe him. "Alright, well I have to head this way."

Harry nodded. "Wait, could you ... could you ask Hannah Abbott to come out? I need to talk to her."

"Sure, Harry."

Harry nodded and he waited five minutes before Hannah came out of the hall that obviously led to the Hufflepuff dormitories. "Hannah –"

"Don't you Hannah me, Harry Potter!" Hannah exclaimed. "After everything you said about not wanting to be in this tournament and agreeing with me that it wasn't a good idea you still went ahead and entered! Why did you do it? You couldn't let my house have even a bit of fame?"

Harry sighed. "Hannah, I didn't enter. Moody and Dumbledore think that someone put my name in the goblet under a separate school to confuse it. I swear, I didn't enter. Do you think that I want to be involved in this damn tournament with three other champions who are years older than me in not only skills, but magic as well? Moody

thinks that someone wants to kill me!"

Hannah sighed. "You really didn't enter?"

He shook his head. "I really didn't enter. I wouldn't lie to you. I wouldn't lie to my friends. I did not enter this tournament."

She nodded and then she stepped into his arms, slipping her arms around him to hug him tight. "Are you participating then?"

"I have too. Mr. Crouch says that it's a legally binding magical contract. I don't have a choice. If I could get out of this I would."

She kissed him softly. "I'm sorry that I doubted you."

He smiled at her. "It's okay, I can understand why. Trouble seems to follow me around."

She nodded. "Well, I'm going to go head back in. But I'll talk to you tomorrow. Alright?"

"Okay." She kissed him softly and then she headed back down to her common room and Harry carefully made his way up to Gryffindor tower. At least he knew that he had Hannah and his friends to believe him and not to think that he was just seeking more fame.

He stepped into the portrait hole and was greeted with a roar of noise. He was pulled inside and a red cape of some sort of was draped over his shoulders and a butterbeer thrust in his hand. People began to pepper questions at him. How did he enter? Why hadn't he told anyone? But no one seemed to listen when he tried to explain, again and again, that he hadn't entered. But when he looked around he didn't see Hermione, Ginny, or Ron in sight.

After an hour he finally managed to escape the crowd by insisting that he was tired and he made his way up to the dormitory. He grinned when he saw Ginny curled up on his bed and Ron and Hermione on Ron's bed.

"There you guys are, I was looking for you!"



Ron snorted. "I'm surprised that you even noticed we were missing."

Harry took a seat on the bed next to Ginny and glared at Ron.  
"What's that supposed to mean?"

Ginny slipped her arms around him and hugged him close. Harry returned the hug. "What's wrong, Ginny?"

"Why do you always get stuck in these dangerous situations?"

"I don't know. But Moody thinks I was entered by someone who wants to kill me." Harry said quietly.

"Don't pull that bullshit!" Ron exclaimed. "How the hell did you get your name in there, Harry? After all the crap that you sold me yesterday about not wanting to enter, how it was better to leave it up to the people who were more experienced! Why the hell don't you tell me how you did it?"

"I didn't put my name into that goblet, Ron." Harry replied quietly. "I don't want to be in this tournament. I tried to get out but Crouch says that as soon as my name came out it placed me under a legally binding magical contract. I have no choice."

Ron snorted. "Whatever."

Harry turned to Ginny. "You believe me, don't you?" He tilted her chin so that he could look into her eyes.

"Of course I do. You wouldn't lie to us about something like this."

He sighed in relief. "Thank you. Hermione, you haven't said anything since I walked in."

She nodded. "I know. What did Moody say, Harry?"

"He said that everyone was idiotic for believing that I put my name in the Goblet. He said that no fourteen-year-old could have confunded that goblet. He thinks that someone put a powerful Confundus charm

on the goblet and then added my name under a fourth school, which made sure that I would be picked. He thinks that someone did it to try to kill me. After all, what better way for me to be killed then to make it look like an accident, right?" Harry replied softly as Ginny clung tighter to him. He kept his arm loosely around her. She was obviously worried about him. "I guess I have to compete."

Hermione nodded, ignoring Ron, she walked over and sat on the other side of Harry, throwing her arms around Harry, much in the way that Ginny was cuddled. Harry slid his other arm around her. "Of course I believe you."

Harry hugged his two friends tight just as Seamus walked in and grinned at Harry. "What's this, a party?"

Harry laughed. "Hey, what can I say? I've got the two most beautiful girls in the school in my bed, I'm a lucky guy." He grunted when both Ginny and Hermione's fists hit his gut. "Ow, I was just kidding, jeesh!"

They both kissed his cheeks and then said goodnight to Ron and left. Ron continued to grumble at Harry.

"Ron, you believe me, don't you?"

Ron glared at Seamus as he went into the bathroom and closed the door. "Why is it always you, Harry?"

"I don't know."

Ron snorted. "Well, I don't believe you! You wanted into this damn thing and you got it. So piss off!" He rolled over, sliding the bed curtains shut around him.

Harry stared after him in shock. That was the last thing that he expected. He had support from his girlfriend and two of his best friends, but not the support he needed from his best mate. He didn't know what he was going to do. He reached into his pocket for his mirror and then he went downstairs into the common room. It had cleared out quickly after he had left and was now empty. He curled up into his favourite armchair near the fire and put the mirror to his

mouth. "James Potter."

His father's face appeared in the mirror thirty seconds later. "Hello, Harry. You should be in bed, it's late."

Harry nodded solemnly. "Can't sleep."

James' face filled with concern. "What's wrong?"

"Da ... they picked the champions for the Tri-Wizard Tournament tonight."

"Okay ..."

Harry gulped. "My name was picked."

"WHAT?" James exploded. "You're not of age! Dumbledore said that the tournament was only for seventeen year olds! How the hell did you get your name in there?"

"I didn't put my name in, Da. There are four champions. The goblet picked one from each school and then my name came out. Cedric Diggory is the other champion from Hogwarts. I have to compete though; Crouch said that it was a magical contract. I've got no choice!"

"Do you have any idea how your name got in there?"

Harry shook his head. "No, but Moody has this theory." He quickly explained what Moody had thought.

James' face was pale. "That is true. So someone obviously has it in for you then ... do they know anything about what Voldemort is doing?"

"I don't think so. But he obviously didn't put my name in the goblet. Hannah, Ginny, and Hermione believe me but Ron doesn't. He thinks that I put my name in and simply refused to let him join in because I wanted the glory! Where does he get such a stupid idea?" Harry replied angrily.

James sighed. "I don't know, Harry. Look, I'll look into it and I'll fill Padfoot and Moony in. We'll see what we can do. Keep me posted on what's happening."

Harry nodded. "Okay. Goodnight, Da."

James gave him a small smile from the mirror. "Goodnight, Harry, I love you."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Da," but at his father's raised eyebrow he grinned. "Love you too."

James grinned. "Talk to you later." Then he disappeared.

Harry tucked the mirror back into his pocket and turned to look at the fire. He watched the flames, the red, gold, and orange and he sat in silence. He didn't know how long he sat there but when he finally closed his eyes, the flames had changed to ashes.

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## **Chapter 17: Trials and Tribulations**

**Author's Notes:** Please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XVII – Trials and Tribulations**

The next few days were a disaster for Harry. The entire school was against him. But the Hufflepuffs were the worst because they believed that he had stolen their champion's glory. Ron still wasn't talking to him and Hermione seemed to think that Ron did believe Harry but he was just jealous over his fame. Harry had thought that this was ridiculous but Hermione was insistent and had forced him to look at it from Ron's point of view. Harry had always been in the spotlight and Ron had always been pushed slightly to the side. This was just the last straw in Ron's mind. Harry still thought that this was

ridiculous but at the same time he did see what Hermione had meant by that.

Hagrid had immediately believed Harry to his great relief. He had only commented on that fact that everything seemed to happen to him.

One week later as Harry was walking back from potions class by himself he felt his mirror heat up in his pocket and he grinned in relief. He had just pulled it out when Ginny came over to him.

"Hey Harry," she replied. "I saw Ron and Hermione in the library so I thought I'd come see what you were doing."

He tugged her into a corner of the hall with him and he hopped up onto the window ledge and pulled out the mirror. "Shh."

She looked at him quizzically as he looked down into the mirror and she was surprised to see the face of Sirius Black there, as was Harry.

"Padfoot, how did you get a hold of the mirror?"

Sirius grinned broadly. "Oh, well, I still had my copy and we got another one for Remus and then we used James' to hook them all together. So now you've got a four way mirror, but you can only talk to one of us at a time. James told Moony and I what happened. How are you holding up?"

Harry shrugged. "Alright. Ron's still not talking to me. Only the people in Gryffindor seem to be giving me any credit and the rest of the school hates me!"

Ginny jumped up on the window ledge to sit next to him and she gave him a small hug. "Well, Hannah, Hermione, and I believe you."

Harry grinned at her. "I know and I appreciate it."

Sirius grinned. "Hey Gorgeous, you look more beautiful every day. I bet your father and brothers are worried they'll have to beat the boys off with a stick."

She laughed and blushed a bit at his comment. "I don't think so. But thank you."

"So did you only call to check up on me? Or did you call to flirt with Ginny?" Harry asked.

Sirius shrugged. "Not really no, but that was the main reason. And hey, nothing wrong with flirting with a pretty girl." At Ginny's blush he laughed. "The other reason is that Wormtail was spotted in London."

"WHAT?"

"Yeah, and get this by the head of the Magical Law Enforcement unit and his partner. They're prepared to swear in court that it was him and that he's alive."

Harry grinned. "Does that mean –?"

Sirius nodded. "It means exactly that. There's a court trial tomorrow afternoon and the entire story is going to come out. You should be getting some sort of special notice in the mail because the court wants you, Ron, Hermione, Remus, and Snape to all testify. Dumbledore will be there as well."

Harry grinned. "You're going to be free!"

"Yeah, it will be great! I mean I love living here with Prongs, Moony and you but I would like to be able to come and go as I please."

Ginny grinned. "Congratulations Sirius!"

"Thanks. So listen I'll talk to you tomorrow then after ... well, hopefully after everything goes okay. Be careful and don't worry about Ron, he'll come around."

Then he was gone.

Harry grinned at Ginny. "This is wonderful! I didn't get anything in the mail though."

Ginny shrugged. "It will probably come at dinner. Come on let's go get some food."

He nodded. "Gin wait," when she turned back to him he smiled. "Can you uh, not tell anyone about this mirror? It's sort of my secret."

She grinned at him. "Of course, I won't tell anyone."

"Thanks."

They headed down to dinner at the Great Hall and took their seats. Not even five minutes later, owls arrived with messages for Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Snape. Harry grinned at them as he read the official invitation. "You guys will come right? I mean, you know that Snape is going to try to lie his way through this?"

Ron nodded. "Yeah, I want that bastard punished and Sirius being free legally is the first place to start."

At those words Harry thought that Ron might be talking to him again but then he turned back to his food and the conversation he was having with Seamus.

Hermione smiled at him. "I'll be there too, Harry."

He nodded and solemnly went back to eating his meal. When he was finished he glanced over at Hannah. It had been one week now since he had been chosen as champion. She had told him that she had believed him but yet she had been keeping her distance. He had barely managed to speak two words to her since the evening that his name came out of the goblet. He sighed and walked over to her.

"Hannah, can I talk to you for a few minutes?" He asked.

She nodded. "Okay, I'll meet you in the entrance hall in five minutes. I just want to finish my pudding."

He smiled at her. "Alright."

He waited patiently for her to come out. She was a little more than

five minutes and when he watched her notice him he sighed. Her expression was exactly what he had been dreading.

“Hey, listen want to go for a walk?”

She nodded. “Okay.”

They headed outside into the court yard walking in silence. Finally, Harry spoke up. “Listen Hannah, we get along pretty well together but I think that we’re personally more suited to friends then anything else ... especially with what’s going on with the tournament. Everyone from your house hates me so I can only imagine the pressure that you’ve been getting to break it off with me. Am I right?”

She sighed. “Incredibly. Everyone has been accusing me of betrayal because I’m going out with you. It is hard to take especially when it’s from your own friends. And you are right about us; we are more friends then anything else. We have been since the beginning.”

He nodded. “Can we still be friends?”

She smiled at him. “I’d like that. In a way, I’m kind of sorry that it’s not working out between us. We had fun together.”

He grinned at her. “Well, we can still have fun if any of your friends start talking to me again.”

She laughed. “I’ve tried to tell them that you didn’t enter but they don’t want to believe me. Besides, Hufflepuff really hasn’t had any glory and Cedric is just the guy to bring it to us, you know?”

He nodded. “Yeah I know.”

She smiled and leaned over to kiss him softly on the lips. “Goodbye Harry.”

He smiled back. “Goodbye.”

He watched her leave and he sat quietly on the bench in the court yard as the sun went down. He wasn’t really sad to know that he was



no longer dating Hannah and he almost felt guilty because when she had so readily accepted he had felt relief. But it was difficult for her and he could understand that but he had also realized that even though he liked kissing Hannah that's all they had. They were friends and that was good enough for him. He headed back to Gryffindor tower, Hannah no longer on his mind but instead the trial for Sirius Black.

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The next evening, Harry, Ron, Hermione, Snape, and Dumbledore stood in Dumbledore's office around the portkey that had been sent to take them to the court house. No one had really spoken to each other so when the pull at Harry's navel came he knew that it was time. The circular court room was filled with people as Harry was brought into a small room to take a seat by himself. They were obviously keeping the witnesses separate.

He wasn't sure how long he waited in there but when he was asked to come out he was led over to a seat next to the main podium. A tall man with a brown moustache spoke to him.

"Are you Harry James Potter?"

He nodded. "Yes sir."

"I am going to give you a vial of truth potion now which is important to the case and trial of Sirius Black. We normally do not use truth potion in trials but we are making an exception for this case as we have two completely different stories. Do you agree?"

"Yes sir."

He drank the sour liquid that the man handed him and immediately seemed to go into this trance-like state that made his eyes look flat and his voice the same. The man immediately began his interview.

"Harry James Potter?"

"Yes."

“What happened on the night of 21st June, 1993?”

“Ron, Hermione, and I went down to visit Hagrid because his Hippogriff Buckbeak was going to be executed. It was wrong of them to kill the creature as Draco Malfoy hadn’t really been injured. Hagrid specifically said that Hippogriffs were proud creatures and that if you insulted one he would attack. Malfoy walked right up to Buckbeak and called him stupid. He got a gash on his arm. Madam Pomfrey healed it in about two seconds but he was moaning and complaining just long enough for Buckbeak to be declared dangerous. We knew that Hagrid was grieving so we went down to see if he was okay. He told us to go back to the school. He said that we shouldn’t have to see something like that. Then Hermione found Scabbers.”

“Scabbers?” The man asked.

Harry nodded. “Ron’s rat. He had been missing for a while now and Ron had accused Hermione’s cat Crookshanks of eating him because there had been balls of rat hair and cat fur as well as blood on Ron’s bed sheets. We now know that he faked his own death though.”

“What happened after you found Scabbers?”

“Well, Ron and Hermione started arguing again. They do that a lot. Then Hagrid said that we had to leave because Dumbledore was coming with the Minister of Magic and the executioner. So we slipped on my invisibility cloak and we snuck out the back door. But as we started to escape, Scabbers was going wild in Ron’s hands. He bit him and Ron dropped him. Then Ron threw off the cloak and hurried after him. It was starting to get dark by this time. Then out of nowhere this huge scruffy black dog came barrelling out of the forest and grabbed Ron’s leg, dragging him into an opening beneath the Whomping Willow.”

“What did you do then?” The man asked.

“Hermione and I followed. We found ourselves in the Shrieking Shack. Ron told us that it was a trap and that Sirius Black was an animagus

and had cornered me there to try to kill me. That was what everyone thought that he had escaped for. Well, we started arguing and then I jumped him. I started hitting him and beating him with my fists. Then Uncle Remus came in and used a disarming charm to throw me off of Sirius. Then the next thing I knew they were hugging. I was shocked and I was angry that Uncle Remus would betray me like that. But then the truth started to come out. Sirius explained that yes he had indeed convinced Da to change Secret Keepers but he had no idea that Pettigrew was a Death Eater. We still weren't sure how to react but then Snape came in."

"What did Snape do?"

"He had been standing there, listening for who knows how long under my invisibility cloak which we had left at the base of the tree when we came in. But he refused to listen to reason. He just kept saying that he was going to turn us all in. He had his wand pointed at Sirius. I just wanted to know the truth and it seemed that Ron and Hermione did as well because the next thing I know all three of us had attempted to disarm Snape at once. The spell was so powerful that he flew back against the wall and was knocked unconscious. Then we continued to talk. Sirius and Uncle Remus took Scabbers from Ron and using a spell forced him to return to his human form and there stood Peter Pettigrew. He was pathetic and he was crying telling me that he didn't mean to betray my parents. Then he would turn it around on Sirius. Uncle Remus and Sirius decided to kill him together but I told them not too. I told them that my mum wouldn't have wanted that and that Pettigrew could go to the Dementors. They agreed. Sirius then found out that my da was alive, he had never known that. We left with Snape leading the way on a stretcher but then Uncle Remus began to transform. In the chaos of the evening he had forgotten to take his potion. Sirius went after him in his dog form to try to hold him back but then Pettigrew transformed as well and he got away."

The man nodded. "How did you help Sirius Black escape from the castle?"

"McGonagall had given Hermione a Time Turner at the beginning of the year to use for her classes. We were in the hospital wing and Dumbledore came in. He told us that he believed us but that the

Minister didn't and that he had ordered the Dementors to kiss Sirius. He was already gone. Then he told Hermione that three turns should do it and that we might be able to save more than one life. He locked us in. I didn't understand what was happening but Hermione pulled this necklace out and the next thing I knew we were in a broom cupboard watching ourselves head down to Hagrid's house. It was weird. Hermione explained to me what had happened. Then I understood. We would save Buckbeak. We hid in the forest until Dumbledore, Fudge, and Macnair had seen Buckbeak tied up then I approached him and bowed. He bowed back so I brought him into the woods with us. Then we watched as everyone went into the Whomping Willow. I wanted to catch Pettigrew but Hermione wouldn't let me, she said that he had run off too far and that no one could find a rat in the dark. She was right, I knew. Once everyone had gone into the school we flew Buckbeak up to Flitwick's office which was where Dumbledore told us that Sirius was. We opened the window and told him to get on. We went up to the top of the Astronomy Tower and then we let him fly free. We returned to the hospital wing just as Dumbledore was locking the door. We told him what we had done and he only smiled and said that he knew nothing about it. We had just climbed back into our beds when chaos erupted. Fudge was furious that Sirius had escaped."

The man nodded again and this time muttered an incantation that brought Harry out of his trance. "You may go sit over there."

Harry took a seat next to James and looked up at him. "Did you have to testify?"

James nodded. "Yeah, about what happened that night when Sirius was imprisoned."

"Oh."

They turned their attention back to the front. Ron was next. His story came out and it was identical to Harry's story. After Ron there was Hermione, then Remus, Snape, Dumbledore, Fudge, and finally Sirius. Because Snape had been forced to take truth serum he had told the full truth as had Fudge. Finally the man with the brown moustache stood up.

“There will be a short recess and the verdict will be announced upon return.”

Harry turned to James then. “You don’t think that they’ll actually imprison him again do you?”

James shook his head. “No, I don’t see how they can. Every single person here took truth serum and pensieve memories were viewed. Sirius is an innocent man. The only thing is maybe we will be charged with a few things. Such as hiding a wanted criminal; illegal animagi; helping a wanted criminal escape; freeing Buckbeak; and Hermione might be charged with the Time Turner thing. We have to consider these things as well.”

They sat in silence for a few minutes before James spoke up again. “Ron talking to you yet?”

“No, no more than he has to.”

“I see. How is Hannah doing?”

Harry sighed. “We broke up. We really were more friends than anything else and we decided to just be friends. It was also hard for her with Cedric coming from Hufflepuff.”

James nodded. “Well, don’t worry there will be more girls. Have you thought anything about the first task?”

Harry shook his head. “No and I’m definitely pretty scared.”

James draped his arm around his son’s shoulders. “You’re going to be okay. I’m going to be there, as will Sirius and Remus to see you, to support you. Okay?”

He nodded. “Thanks Da.”

They both turned at the sound of the door opening in the back and the man with a brown moustache came out. “The verdict has been declared. First of all, we are demanding that Cornelius Fudge step

down as Minister of Magic for his severe stupidity and the way that he handled the problem. By refusing to listen to the stories that Sirius Black had done what he had been accused of and then by trying to get him killed without listening to him shows us that he is not meant to be minister if he won't listen to reason."

Fudge had paled considerably. "But – but I –"

"You will step down." The man replied coolly. "Second of all, we would like to replace Fudge with our very own Madam Amelia Bones if she would be so honoured."

Madam Bones stood up, smiling. "I would be honoured, thank you Counsellor."

The Counsellor nodded. "Right then. Also, we understand that the witnesses of the this trial broke many rules and laws while aiding Mr. Black, however, no charges will be pressed against them because they were doing what they believed to be right since the Minister had refused to listen to reason. We do however make a formal request that Mr. James Potter and Mr. Sirius Black register with the animagus department immediately. If they do not comply, charges will then be made accordingly. Third, we would like to offer a formal apology to Mr. Black for everything that we have put him through. We declare his innocence from the crimes and offer him 35,000 galleons as a token of our apology and as payment for the twelve years he spent wrongfully imprisoned."

Cheers erupted in the court room as Harry made a beeline for Sirius. He jumped into his arms, laughing when he was swung around. "You're free!"

Sirius held Harry tight in a big bear hug. "I'm free! And I have you to thank!"

Harry grinned up at him. "Not just me! So what are you going to do now?"

Sirius shrugged. "I don't know."

James came up behind him. "You can always take out that motor bike you fixed up. Go for a ride?"

Sirius released Harry and hugged James. "Prongs, I – I owe you for this. If it hadn't been for you and everything that you've done I might never have –"

His voice broke as James hugged him back. "I'd do it again! Besides, I owed you for not believing you all those years ago."

Hermione's arm slipped through Harry's and he turned to see tears rolling down her cheeks. "Hermione, why are you crying?" He asked as he looked at Ron for support.

She sniffed. "Look at them; they're so wonderful and so happy. I'm so glad that Sirius is free."

"That's why are you crying?" Harry asked as he tugged her into his arms to comfort her.

"I'm just so happy."

Ron rolled his eyes. "Mental."

Harry laughed as Dumbledore and Snape approached them. "Hello, is it time to go back?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes it is. Come along you three."

Harry hugged Hermione tightly before letting her go and hugging the Marauders goodbye, promising to write soon. Then they were portkeyed back to Hogwarts. They left Dumbledore's office and to Harry's surprise, Ron was still being incredibly distant with him. He had thought, for a second there that everything was back to normal.

They entered the common room to find Ginny pacing alone in front of the fireplace. Her head popped up at the sound of the portrait hole. "Well?"

Harry grinned. "Innocent of all charges."

Ginny whooped and threw herself into Harry's arms. "Oh, this is wonderful! I'm so happy for him!"

Harry grinned as they took a seat on the couch. "Yeah, it is great. He's free."

Hermione smiled as she sat down on the couch as well. "And Fudge was forced to step down as minister."

Ginny grinned. "Forced?"

Harry nodded. "Madam Bones took his place."

Ginny stood up and did a little happy dance making Harry and Hermione laugh. "Fudge is gone! Fudge is gone! Fudge is gone!"

Hermione grinned. "Well, I'm off to bed, you coming Ginny?"

Ginny nodded. "In a minute." As Hermione headed up the stairs, Ginny turned to Harry. "I noticed that Ron didn't stay down here."

Harry shrugged. "He's still not talking to me."

Ginny sighed. "My brother is the champion of all gits. Look Harry, he'll come around I know he will."

He nodded. "I hope you're right. Goodnight Gin."

"Goodnight."

He headed up the stairs to the boys dormitory thinking of Sirius' happy face. He figured he knew what would happen that evening at Potter Manor. There would be one huge party and his Da, Uncle Remus, and Sirius would probably get drunk. He laughed at the thought. If he was there they would probably let him try to some of the alcohol unless Maddy was in the room. She was strict. He grinned to himself, no one deserved to be happier than Sirius did. Then he closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.



## Chapter 18: The First Task

**Author's Notes:** It's a little rushed in parts that are the same as canon but thats bc i dont want a rewrite right? But i liek the changes i made. Please review!! newly edited

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## Chapter XVIII – The First Task

Across the school, the news of Sirius Black being proclaimed innocent and of Fudge leaving the office spread like wild fire. Everyone was impressed that Harry, Ron, and Hermione had all been at the trial. The three of them were constantly being bombarded by questions about what had actually happened and why Sirius had been wrongfully imprisoned. After the third or fourth time that he explained it, Harry was getting tired of it. Ron still wasn't speaking to him and if that wasn't bad enough, other then Gryffindor the entire school was still against him.

Malfoy had come into Potions class only that morning with a badge that read: **Support Cedric Diggory: The Real Hogwarts Champion** and when they pressed it the words changed into **Potter Sucks**. This had hardly boosted Harry's spirits. Then Malfoy had called Hermione a mudblood. In fact, it had been the last straw for what he was finding out to be a very stressful week. It had led to a duel between Harry and Malfoy. However, the duel had not gone as well as one would have hoped. Harry had used the Furnunculus Charm but it had hit Goyle instead causing huge boils to spring up all over his face. Malfoy had used the Densaugeo Charm which hit Hermione and it had caused her front teeth, which were already slightly large due to an overbite, to grow alarmingly and hang over her chin. Harry's anger only increased when Snape arrived and told Hermione that he didn't notice a difference to her appearance and she had run off to the hospital wing in tears. He and Ron had both received detentions for their protest at this.

Harry's anger was not decreasing as the class went on and when Colin came in to collect Harry for photos he could only groan. He followed Colin down to the classroom where the other champions would be waiting as he remembered the lovely second year he had had and how Lockhart had lectured him on photos. Fleur, Cedric, and Viktor were already waiting. To Harry's disgust, the interviewer was one Rita Skeeter.

James hated Rita Skeeter and Harry knew that it was for a reason. She never told the truth in anything that she ever wrote in the *Daily Prophet*. Harry remembered how she had written about people being killed at the World Cup and how Mrs. Weasley had completely freaked out. James had once told him that Skeeter had even flirted outrageously with him and wanted to marry him. Harry had been thankful beyond all reason that that had never happened but Uncle Remus had told him that she only wanted money anyway. She was what the goblins titled a 'gold digger'.

Ludo Bagman was there and after explaining that this was going to be the weighing of the wands, which was to basically make sure that the wands were in good working order, there would be a photo shoot and a few questions asked. Rita wanted a moment alone with Harry. Before he could protest he found himself alone in a broom cupboard with her. He ground his teeth in disgust as she began to ask him questions and when he barely answered, words scribbled onto the parchment below and he rolled his eyes, wondering what kind of lies would be printed about him now.

Once Dumbledore had rescued him from the cupboard the wands were weighed by Mr. Ollivander and then a few photos were taken before he had a chance to escape. He made his way down to dinner with a scowl on his face. He saw Hannah and smiled at her.

"Hey."

She smiled warmly at him. "Hey Harry, how are you doing?"

He shrugged. "Alright, a little frustrated, you?"

She grinned. "Busy. Listen, I've seen those badges that the Slytherins

started wearing and I've told people in Hufflepuff not to wear them but \_"

Harry put up his hand to stop her. "Don't worry about it, I'm used to it. I'll see you later."

He hurried away from her and into the Great Hall. He was surprised to see Hedwig sitting on Ginny's shoulder. He took a seat next to Ginny and Hedwig nipped affectionately at him.

"Hey girl, what are you doing with Ginny?"

Ginny smiled at him. "She has a letter for you. She came to visit me because you weren't here yet."

He grinned as he took the parchment from Hedwig's leg and pulled it open. He was surprised to see Hagrid's messy scrawl.

**Harry,**

**Come down and see me tonight around midnight and bring that special cloak of yours.**

**Hagrid**

Harry glanced up in surprise. Hagrid had never asked him to visit so late.

Ginny looked over at Harry's surprised face. "I recognized Hagrid's writing, did something happen?"

He shook his head no and showed her the letter. "No, it's just ... odd."

Ginny quickly read it over. "Yeah, that is odd. Well, he must have a reason."

Hermione took a seat on the other side of Harry. "Hey guys."

"Hermione," Harry began as he studied her. "You look different."

Hermione blushed and Ginny grinned broadly. "Your teeth are different! What happened?"

Hermione grinned. "Well, after Malfoy hit me with that spell I went to the hospital wing and Madam Pomfrey was shrinking them down. I held a mirror to my face and she told me to tell her when they were back to normal. I might have let her go a little farther."

Harry laughed. "You look great."

Hermione smiled and hugged him tight. "Thanks Harry! So what were you two talking about when I came in?"

Harry handed her the letter from Hagrid.

"Hmm, that is very unlike Hagrid, don't you think?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, but it must be important or something. I'll go later and see what he wants."

A brown owl landed in front of Ginny and she squealed in delight as she recognized the writing on the parchment. Harry looked at her quizzically. Hermione only smiled. "Again Ginny? What have you been telling him? He never writes that often!"

Ginny grinned. "I'm his favourite that's why!"

"Who?" Harry asked quizzically.

Ginny only shushed him as she began to read. Her grin only broadened as she got farther down the letter. Then she smiled up at them. "Read this."

She handed the letter to Harry and he and Hermione leaned over to read:

**Firefly,**

**How are you doing? Been busy telling all your secrets to the secret diary? I hope so as I made sure that that diary was well**

secured and secret! Well, nothing new going on really. We found another tomb hidden inside this ancient pharaoh's chamber. I think it belonged to a servant or maybe his wife or mistress because why else would it be hidden in the pharaoh's tomb? Of course I could be wrong but we'll have to get someone in here to help us translate. My translation skills are only so great.

What I've gotten so far out of it though is that it is definitely a woman. She was incredibly beautiful because the words are marvelling her beauty beyond everything. She also seemed to have had the voice of an angel and to be the daughter of Osiris, though that may just be myth and legend but again it is making me lean more towards the pharaoh's wife or mistress and hey maybe even a daughter. I'm thinking the daughter might be a far stretch though as men didn't want daughters years ago and they were thoroughly insulted when they did get them. Go figure, eh?

I remember Dad's face when he brought you home. He was completely mesmerized by anything that you did and he held you so much differently then he did the rest of us like he was afraid he'd break you or something. But hey, he learned his lesson fast, right Firefly? I remember sneaking into your room to watch you sleep in your crib and you changing my hair to black and then only going back to sleep with your hands wrapped tightly around my fingers. You were a pistol, Firefly!

Whew, now that I'm finished that random trip down memory lane I actually wrote to tell you something. Mum is going crazy about Harry being in this tournament. I actually found out that she sent James Potter a howler about it, something about being an irresponsible parent. She apologized almost simultaneously as she knew that she was out of line and that it had nothing to do with the fact that his name was drawn but she's worried sick. She's been nagging me to death and Charlie too as I just had an owl from him. Anyway, basically with the first task coming up Harry needs to be prepared and in something that I can't write in this letter but will be coming to you, you can help him prepare. Your gift should be on the other end of the Hogwarts grounds tonight. You'll see what I mean when you go there. I know you can sneak out, Firefly, but be careful.

**Write back and tell me what you think of your present and if it helped Harry out or not.**

**Love always,  
Bill**

**P.S. Tell Ron that I think he is a royal git for betraying his best mate during these hard times.**

“A gift?” Hermione asked.

Ginny nodded. “I’ll sneak out later tonight and see it. I wonder what it is.”

Harry stared at the letter for a minute. “Bill seems to think that it will help me?”

Ginny shrugged. “I don’t know much about that but while you go visit Hagrid I’m going to go see what on earth Bill could have sent me!” She grinned as she thought about the letter.

Harry turned to Hermione. “At least Bill seems to be on my side out of all of this. Ron is being a git.”

Hermione sighed. “Harry, this is hard for Ron. It’s always you. I know that you don’t plan it that way or want it that way, but it is always you. I think this was just the last straw for him. He’ll come around but right now he just needs to realize that he is being a git, alright?”

He nodded. “Alright, I’m sorry that I’ve been bugging you about him.”

“It’s okay. It’s just getting annoying to be running in between both of you. You’re both my friends and I don’t want to pick sides.”

“I understand, Hermione, don’t worry.”

He went back to his meal in silence, his mind not only wandering to Bill’s present but also to what Hagrid wanted.

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At eleven forty-five that evening, Harry snuck out of the tower and began to make his way down to Hagrid's cabin under his invisibility cloak. He knocked on the cabin door and Hagrid grinned down at him.

"Harry, that you?"

"Yeah Hagrid, what's this about?"

"Stay under that cloak, be quiet and follow me. I got something real nice to show you." He replied before he began making his way towards the edge of the Forbidden Forest.

Harry followed Hagrid and gasped in surprise when he realized that they were picking up Madame Maxime on the way. He winced as he realized that Hagrid seemed to have a huge crush on the alarmingly large woman. They were flirting back and forth and just as Harry began to get tired of watching this he heard a roar that thundered through the night. He walked a little faster and when he found the paddock that Hagrid was leading him too he gulped in alarm.

Dragons. Four huge dragons were fighting against the chains, cages and the wizards that were there shooting stunning spells at them. Harry could only stare in shock as they managed to contain them in their cages. Then he recognized the red head that seemed to be in charge as he made his way over to Hagrid.

"Hagrid, nice date." Charlie Weasley replied as Madame Maxime headed over to the dragons to take a closer look.

Hagrid shrugged. "I just thought that she'd want to see them. They're beautiful."

Harry yanked his cloak off. "Hagrid, why would you want me to see the dragons?"

Charlie grinned at Harry. "Harry, the dragons are for the first task."

He gulped. "What - what do I have to do?"

Charlie shrugged. "Just get past them I think. I'm not sure but they wanted nesting mothers for some reason." He grinned when Ginny stepped up next to them. "Hey Shortstop, where have you been?"

Ginny grinned. "Robby was showing me the dragons up close now that they are in their cages." She turned to Harry. "Charlie says that they're for the first task."

Harry nodded. "Yeah." He watched as Karkaroff came from the other end of the paddock and made his way over to the dragons as well.

Charlie picked Ginny up, swinging her in two quick circles so she laughed and then he kissed her cheeks. "Kay Shortstop, you better head back up to bed. I'm sure Harry will share his cloak with you that so you two won't get caught."

Harry nodded as Ginny hugged Charlie tight. "Bill told me that he was sending me a present that would help Harry, but I didn't think that it would be such a good one."

Charlie laughed. "The best of! After all, what's a better gift then me? Now go to bed!"

She laughed as she slid under the cloak with Harry. They said goodbye and started back towards the castle. Ginny spoke first.

"Do you think that helps to know what you're going to be facing?"

"I don't know. Right now I'm just working on how the hell I'm going to get past a dragon!"

Ginny nodded. "You can do it, Harry. Bill and Charlie have faith in you and so do I. Once you think of something you'll be fine."

He nodded. "I hope you're right." He was quiet for a few minutes before he spoke. "Gin, why does Charlie call you 'Shortstop' and Bill call you 'Firefly'?"

Ginny laughed. "Bill and Charlie are the only ones who gave me



nicknames. Bill started that nickname when I was about three because my temper is so bad and because I did insane wandless magic when I was younger. Fred and George had snuck into my room and took the toy broomstick that Bill had bought me and hid it away with my favourite teddy bear. I was not pleased. I found them in their room and I don't know exactly how it worked but I somehow made their noses grow down to their feet, their hair green, and they got huge boils all over their faces. They never forgot it. They were only six years old at the time. Bill told me that I came on like fire, quick and lethal. But I was as bright as the sun or something like that so he started calling me Firefly. Only Bill uses that one. Charlie calls me Shortstop because I'm so much smaller than everyone else. He used to tease me because I could never reach anything and he always said that since I was the only girl I was going to be the shortest in the family. He became best mates with this muggleborn from North America and he was obsessed with something called baseball. Charlie was in love with the sport for the longest time. Anyway so he started calling me Shortstop. I used to hate it when I was little but now I'm used to it and I know that I probably won't even get taller than Mum. She's only 5'4, I'm doomed."

Harry laughed. "Aww poor Ginny, doomed to shortness."

She shrugged as they climbed through the portrait hole, pulling off the cloak and saw Hermione sitting on the couch in front of the fire. "Well?"

"Hagrid showed me the first task. Charlie was there, which was Ginny's present, and he was there with dragons."

Hermione paled as she clutched Harry's hands tightly in hers. "Dragons?"

Harry nodded as he winced at how hard she was squeezing his hands. "I think I have to get past them. Charlie wasn't sure."

Ginny nodded. "There are four dragons. Charlie told me that they're nesting mothers. A Chinese Fireball, a Swedish Short-Snout, a Common Welsh Green, and a Hungarian Horntail. The Horntail is the worst. Charlie said that she's got a real attitude and is highly

dangerous.”

Hermione sighed. “We’ll figure something out. Right now, I think we just need to get some sleep.”

Ginny stood up as well. “Yeah, goodnight.”

“Goodnight,” Harry replied as he watched Hermione and Ginny head up the staircase. He yanked his mirror out of his pocket and said his father’s name.

James’ face appeared in the mirror, his hair all sleep-tussled. “Whassamatter?”

Harry grinned in relief to see his father’s confused face. He needed support right now more than anything. “Da.”

James rubbed at his eyes and then he looked at Harry in concern. “What’s wrong, Harry? It’s two in the morning.”

Harry nodded. “I know. I just got back in. Hagrid showed me what the first task is. It’s dragons.”

James sat up instantly wide awake. “Dragons? What do you have to do?”

“I don’t know. But Charlie Weasley was there and he says that they asked for nesting mothers and that he thinks we just have to get past them. What am I going to do? I’m a goner!” Harry exclaimed.

James stuck his tongue out in concentration. “I have no idea. The eyes of a dragon are its weakest link but even if you manage to blind it you could still be in a lot of trouble.”

“And?”

James sighed. “I don’t know, Harry. Look, I’ll talk to the Marauders in the morning and we’ll see what we can come up with but for now, just do a lot of research on dragons and we’ll compare notes tomorrow evening. You’ve only got tomorrow. The task is in two days.”

Harry gulped. "I know. Are you coming?"

James grinned. "Wouldn't miss it. Moony and Padfoot will be there as well."

Harry grinned, a sense of relief floating through him. "Alright. We'll compare notes tomorrow. Goodnight, Da."

James nodded. "Goodnight, Harry, get some sleep."

Harry nodded as he watched his father's face disappear from the mirror. He didn't think sleep was going to happen.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next morning, Harry saw Cedric leaving the Great Hall with a group of friends and he remembered that both Karkaroff and Madame Maxime had seen the dragons last night. He'd bet money that they had told their champions of the task ahead. He ignored Hermione's call as he hurried after him.

"Cedric!" He called out as the entire group turned towards him. He caught the sneers of some of the students but he ignored them. "Cedric, can I talk to you for a moment, privately?"

His friends began to protest but he held up his hand. "Go on to class, I'll catch up." He waited until all of his friends had gone around the corner before turning to Harry. "What can I do for you, Harry?"

"Cedric, look, I was ... well ... the first task is dragons."

"What?" Cedric asked as he dropped his textbook in surprise.

Harry nodded. "Dragons. We have to get past them I think. I don't know much else."

Cedric gulped. "Why are you telling me this?"

Harry shrugged. "Because Fleur and Viktor know and it's only fair that

all four of us have the same start, don't you think?"

Cedric nodded. "Yeah ... thanks. Listen, Harry about the badges, I've asked them not to –"

"Don't worry about it. I'm used to them."

Cedric nodded. "Well, I have to get to class. I'll see you."

Harry nodded as he watched him leave. Then he gulped when he heard a familiar rough voice say his name and he turned around to face Professor Moody.

"Potter, come into my office."

Harry stared down at the floor as he followed Moody into the office. He glanced around briefly at all of the dark detectors before taking a seat.

"Potter, that was a decent thing you just did to Diggory there."

Harry looked up in surprise. He had thought for sure that Moody was going to accuse him of cheating or something. "Thanks, sir."

Moody nodded. "Listen, you have to play to your strengths in this. I know that your father is going to try to help you out but I think that you need to look towards your strengths for this task. The other three champions have many advantages that you don't because they're older. They know more magic and they have more experience. What are you good at?"

Harry shrugged. "Um, I don't know ... Quidditch?"

Moody nodded. "I've heard that you're a pretty fair flyer, better actually. Flying past a dragon should be easy for you."

"Yeah, but I can't bring my broom with me," Harry replied dully.

Moody rolled his eyes, his magical eye getting a little too enthusiastic. "I thought that you were more intelligent than that, Potter! You're

allowed your wand.”

Harry was about to comment on that and then he remembered the summoning charms that they had been learning in Flitwick’s class and he grinned. “Thanks Professor.”

Moody winked at him. “Good luck, Potter, and tell your father I said hello.”

Harry nodded as he hurried out of the classroom and raced to his next class. Hermione scolded him for being so late and for ignoring her earlier that morning. Harry quickly told her about Moody and how he needed to practice his summoning charms. She promised to help right away. By the end of the night, Harry had managed to fully master the homework.

After Hermione went to bed he pulled out his mirror and called his da. James’ face appeared. “Da, I think I know what I’m going to do.”

James looked surprised at the sudden confidence radiating from his son’s face. “Good, what?”

Harry grinned. “I’m not going to tell. You can see tomorrow. But Moody helped me a bit by hinting at something. He also says to say hi.”

James nodded. “Alright ... Harry, are you sure that you’re ready for this?”

Harry shrugged. “As best as I can be, yeah. See you tomorrow, Da.” Then he shoved the mirror back into his pocket and went upstairs to bed, hoping to find some sleep before morning.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next morning, Harry and the other champions were brought to a huge tent near the paddock where Harry had been before. Bagman explained that they would each go out one at a time. They reached into a bag to pull out a model of the thing they would face. They had to steal the golden egg from the nest. Fleur pulled out the Welsh

Green with a number two on it; Krum pulled out the Chinese Fireball with a number three on it; Cedric pulled out the Swedish Short-Snout with a number one around it; and Harry gulped as he pulled out the Hungarian Horntail with the number four around it.

Then he sat in the tent and waited as he heard nothing but screams and roars from the dragons and from the crowd. When it was finally his turn, he gulped as he stepped out into the paddock, closed his eyes and said: Accio Firebolt.

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As Harry sat in the medical tent letting Madam Pomfrey patch up his arm he grinned broadly as Hermione, James, Sirius, Remus, Ginny, and Ron came into the tent. They all congratulated him on his great flying job and the Marauders all hugged him tight before Ron shuffled his way to the front. He stared down at his feet for a moment before speaking.

“I – I reckon someone must have put your name in the goblet. I’m sorry I didn’t believe you.”

Harry grinned. “Bout time, mate.”

Ron grinned as Hermione stamped her feet in frustration. “You two are so stupid sometimes!”

Harry and Ron grinned at each other as James slipped his arm around Harry’s shoulders as they left the tent to see his scores. Harry had managed to snag first place. He grinned as Bagman asked the champions to come into the tent for a minute with their golden eggs. Harry excused himself from his friends and family and followed Bagman into the tent. Bagman explained that inside of the egg was a clue as to what the second task would be and that the second task wouldn’t take place until February.

Harry headed back out to his family and friends, grinning. “That was easier then I thought.”

James laughed. “Brat! You had me worried sick that something would

happen and then you tell me that you have it all figured out! Brilliant flying out there, but then you did learn from the best.”

Sirius grinned. “The mighty James Potter with his ego inflated.”

Ginny laughed. “That’s not nice.”

Sirius swung his arm around Ginny’s shoulders. “But it’s so true, Gorgeous.”

Hermione grinned at Harry. “You were brilliant, Harry, definitely one of the best out there.”

Ron nodded. “Krum was the best after you.” He began to explain in detail what the other champions did to try to get past the dragon. “It was crazy some of the stuff that happened.”

Remus smiled warmly at Harry. “One down, two to go. When is the second task?”

“Not until February. Bagman says that this egg holds a clue to the second task.” Harry explained.

Remus grinned. “Good, you’ve got lots of time to prepare for this one.”

James nodded. “Well, are we heading to Gryffindor Tower or not? I heard Fred and George say something about a party and Dumbledore says we’re invited.”

Sirius laughed. “The Marauders back in action!”

Harry pretended to shudder. “Scary thought.”

Sirius slapped him across the head playfully. “Brat.”

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## Chapter 19: The Yule Ball

**Author's Notes:** Please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XIX – The Yule Ball**

The party in Gryffindor Tower was huge. It was even bigger and better than the Quidditch party was the year before when they had won the Quidditch Cup. Everyone was drinking and snacking and eating and congratulating Harry on a job well done. He was slightly embarrassed by all of the attention but pleased nevertheless. The Marauders were really fun as they told stories about things that they had done at school when they had been there.

Fred and George, however, were definitely the hit of the party. Harry remembered that during the summer Mrs. Weasley had been angry at the products that the twins had been inventing. Joke products, things that she considered foolish and not worth their time. They hadn't gotten as many O.W.L.s as she had deemed they were supposed to and she was not pleased to find them spending their time inventing what she considered to be utter nonsense and a complete waste of their time and talent. But Harry had learnt that the twins really were doing it seriously. They planned to open a joke shop – *Weasleys Wizard Wheezes* – and they had invented quite a few interesting things. At the moment their greatest creation was Canary Creams. They gave one to Neville at the party and with a small pop he turned into a canary, within a few minutes he was back to normal. Everyone was raving about their new invention which could now be added to the list of fake wands and Ton-Tongue Toffee. But Harry was sure that they had tons more.

Sirius finally managed to pull Harry into a corner alone after about two hours into the party. "Congrats Harry, you did an awesome job out there."

Harry grinned. "Thanks. It was easier than I thought once I had my broom. It was just like another Quidditch game."

Sirius laughed. "Well, as long as you got everything going for you



then yeah it worked well. You are an awesome flyer. Listen, I remembered something earlier today at the tournament and James thought that I should inform you."

"What?" He asked.

"Well, remember how Moody theorized that someone put your name into the goblet, well, when I was in Azkaban I remember ... Igor Karkaroff was a Death Eater."

Harry's mouth dropped open in shock. "No way! And you think that he put my name into the Goblet of Fire?"

Sirius nodded. "It's a solid theory. But it's just an idea. I mean I could be completely off base here."

"If he did put it in then he's a pretty good actor. I mean he was furious that I was being allowed to compete and he tried to take his champion completely out of the competition." Harry explained.

"Well, I'm not saying it was him, but he is a pretty good actor, I mean he did convince a jury to release him from Azkaban." Sirius replied. "But then again, I think he just named names of other known Death Eaters and he was set free. But let me tell you this, you never stop being a Death Eater no matter what."

"So are you telling me to watch my back?"

Sirius nodded. "In a nutshell, yeah. The most important thing is for you to get through this tournament alive though, so don't worry too much about Karkaroff. Dumbledore and Moody will be keeping a close eye on him in any case. I just thought that you should know."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, thanks." He stared off into space for a few minutes, not realizing that he was staring at Parvati Patil and Lavender Brown. They smiled at him quizzically and he grinned back having caught himself staring. Sirius gave him an amused look.

"James mentioned that you broke up with Hannah?"

“Yeah it was sort of mutual. I mean, we were really more friends than anything else and once I was deemed the second champion she was in a bit of a bind too with Cedric coming from her own house, you know?” Harry explained. “We’re still friends though.”

Sirius nodded. “I see.” He flashed a grin at Ginny as she walked over.

“Hey, what are you guys doing hiding in a corner? Dean managed to enchant a muggle stereo so now we’ve got music. Come on and dance!”

Sirius laughed. “Only if you save me a dance, Gorgeous!”

Ginny grinned. “Always. Come on!”

She hurried back into the crowd as Sirius grinned after her. Harry turned to his godfather. “You know, you’re awfully friendly with Ginny. Why aren’t you as friendly with Hermione?”

Sirius shrugged. “I get along good with Ginny. She’s a sweetheart and I feel like a protective uncle or older brother or godfather or something to her. Besides, she was the first one to really welcome me. Do you remember when we were at the Burrow before the World Cup and you, James, and Remus introduced me to the Weasleys? Everyone stared at me in shock and surprise except for Ginny. She embraced me in a warm hug and kissed my cheek saying that she had told you months ago that she didn’t believe that I had hurt anyone and she was glad that I had escaped. She also told me that my name would be cleared soon. She just completely welcomed me and accepted me with no questions asked. She reminded me of your mum in that way as well as your grandmother. Just that unconditional support offered. We had a long chat that evening too. It was nice.”

Harry nodded in understanding. He remembered Ginny doing that but he hadn’t thought much of it at the time. “That makes sense. I was just wondering.”

Sirius grinned. “Well, you heard the woman, let’s go dance.”

Harry laughed as Sirius began to lead him over to the large group of

dancing students. "I don't know how to dance."

Sirius grinned at his godson. "Well, there's no time like the present to learn."

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The days passed by quickly after the celebration. Hagrid's class was getting more and more frightening or interesting, depending on your viewpoint. But Hagrid had found these creatures called Blast-Ended Skrewts. They were terrible and Harry dreaded going to class to deal with them. Rita Skeeter was constantly skulking around the school trying to get interviews and she questioned Hagrid about the Skrewts, Harry could only groan as he realized that Hagrid was going to get into trouble after that interview. Rita was going to turn all of his words around.

At some point, Hermione had become overly excited and had dragged Harry and Ron down to the kitchens murmuring something about house elves. Harry and Ron had protested badly at this and at the idea of S.P.E.W. but Hermione swore it had nothing to do with that. He was surprised to find both Dobby and Winky working down there. Dobby was happy to see Harry and basically informed him that anything he could ever want Dobby would get for him. Winky on the other hand was a complete mess. She was devastated by the fact that Crouch had sacked her and was getting drunk on butterbeer every day, which was a very strong drink for house elves.

Then Professor McGonagall had made the announcement. There was to be a Yule Ball on Christmas Day for all students fourth year and above. A younger student could only go if they were invited by an older student. Harry wasn't sure how to react to this and then when McGonagall pulled him aside at the end of class and informed him that he must have a date as he was to open the ball with a dance he could only groan. He had no idea who he was going to ask.

He had animagus lessons with McGonagall again that night and when he returned to the common room, still no farther then changing his one arm, he wondered who he was going to ask. The common room was fairly empty but he found Ginny sitting in front of the fire.

“Hey Gin,” he replied as he took a seat in the armchair across from her.

She grinned. “Hey Harry. Where have you been?”

“McGonagall was helping me with my transfiguration homework. What are you doing?”

She shrugged. “Thinking about the ball. I think Michael might ask me. He’s still flirting with me and yesterday he sent me carnations.”

Harry grinned. “You still haven’t agreed to go out with the bloke? Jeesh you’re really making him suffer! You seem like you really like him, what are you waiting for?”

Ginny chewed her bottom lip nervously. “I don’t know. I do like him and I decided yesterday when I got the carnations that I want to go out with him but I’m waiting for him to ask. Do you think that he’d ask me to the ball? I mean, I can’t go otherwise.”

Harry shrugged. “Well, he does like you so I would think so. Does Ron, Fred, or George know anything about Corner yet?”

She shook her head. “No, only you, Hermione, Colin, Dee, Charlie, and Bill. He’s really sweet, Harry.”

He laughed. “Then tell him you decided that you would like to go out with him after all.”

She grinned. “We’ll see. Well, I’m going to head up to bed, talk to you later. And please don’t tell Ron about Michael.”

“I won’t. Goodnight Gin.”

He watched her walk upstairs just as Hermione came down the stairs. “Hey, what are you doing down here so late?” He asked as he watched the last few stragglers leave the common room.

Hermione shrugged. “I couldn’t sleep. I was going to read for a bit.

What about you?"

"Just got back from McGonagall's office; she was helping me with today's homework. It wasn't clicking or something but I've got it now. Ginny was telling me about Corner."

Hermione grinned. "He does seem to really like her. I don't know him very well but he seems nice. He's also quite good looking. What do you think?"

He shrugged. "He seems alright. I told her to give the bloke a chance. Well, I'm going to try to get some sleep. See you in the morning. Goodnight Hermione."

She smiled at him. "Goodnight Harry."

He headed up to his dormitory and crashed in bed, asleep before his head even hit the pillow.

But his sleep was full of dreams.

*She was dancing in the meadow, arms wide, and surrounded by flowers. The moonlight reflected off her milkmaid skin and the silver satin nightgown clung to her body. Her feet were bare and painted a soft pale pink. The combination made him sigh.*

*He took a step towards her. He was filled with such a strong desire to reach forward and to touch this mystery girl but when he took a step, mist erupted around her and she shook her head at him.*

*"It's not time."*

*"What do you mean?" Harry asked as he tried to move towards the mist. "Who are you?"*

*Her smile made his heart ache even as the figure of her was fading away. "One day you'll understand."*

*Then she was gone and Harry was alone in the meadow.*

He woke up confused at what he had dreamed but soon drifted off into a dreamless sleep with all thoughts of the dream forgotten.

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A few days later, Harry really began to take into consideration how many girls were actually at Hogwarts. They were everywhere. Laughing in the corridors, in the halls, traveling in groups everywhere they went. He realized that it was going to be difficult to find one and to get her on her own long enough to ask her to the ball. But he already knew who he really wanted to ask: Cho Chang. He hadn't really gotten over his crush on her and when he saw her in the halls he wondered if he could be brave enough to ask her to the ball. He decided on the spot that facing the Hungarian Horntail would be easier.

Ron was the same way. He seemed to be having the same dilemma that Harry was having but Harry knew that it wouldn't be as bad if he didn't have date. But McGonagall had ordered Harry to find one. Fred had told them to hurry up and ask someone before all the good ones were taken. It turned out that Fred was going with Angelina Johnson and George was going with Katie Bell. This had not helped their moods.

Finally Ron turned to Harry with a proposition. "Alright, by the end of the day today we'll both have dates to the ball, deal?"

Harry only nodded. "Deal."

He headed up to owlery with Hedwig on his shoulder after his conversation with Ron. He had written back to James informing him of what had happened since the first task. It was just his luck that Cho happened to be in the owlery as well. He smiled at her.

"Hello."

She turned and managed a small smile. "Hi Harry." She saw the owl on his shoulder and grinned. "You have a beautiful owl." She reached out to pet her wing and Hedwig pecked at her fingers angrily and she jumped back. "Ouch."

Harry shrugged. "Sorry, she's temperamental." He gave Hedwig an evil look. "Go on girl; take the letter home to Da." She nipped his fingers affectionately and took off. "Sorry about her."

Cho nodded. "It's alright. Why are you sending a letter home?"

"My Da asked me to write every so often so I thought I'd catch him up on what's going on since the first task."

"Oh."

Harry gulped as he watched at the way her hair sparkled in the light. It was now or never. "Cho, I was wondering, would you maybe, um, would you like to go to the ball with me?"

She shook her head. "I'm sorry, Harry, but I've already said that I would go with Cedric."

He nodded and forced a smile on his face. "That's fine. I just thought maybe we'd have fun. Maybe some other time then. See you."

He headed down the stairs after that, cursing himself for his luck. Cedric Diggory had beaten him to the punch. Didn't it just figure? He had made a fool of himself. He had actually started to like Cedric too. He walked into the common room angrily, completely forgetting about lunch and was surprised to see Ron sitting in a chair by the fire. Ginny was sitting on the arm of the chair and Hermione was kneeling in front of him.

"What's up, mate?"

Ron groaned and buried his face in his hands.

Harry looked at Hermione and Ginny quizzically. Ginny answered.

"He asked Fleur Delacour to the ball."

"Ron! You didn't! What did she say?"

"No of course." Hermione replied. Ron shook his head and Hermione gasped in horror. "She said yes!"

"No!" Ron exclaimed. "She just stared at me and then she walked away."

"Why that no good evil woman!" Ginny exclaimed. "The least she could have done was say no."

"She's part Veela. She told me. Her grandmother was one." Harry explained. "So at least we understand why Ron made a fool of himself. He couldn't help it."

Ron only groaned again and buried his face back into his hands.

Hermione nodded. "Why aren't you at lunch, Harry?"

He shrugged. "I asked Cho to go the ball with me but she's going with Cedric."

Hermione sighed. "I'm sorry, Harry."

He shrugged. "It's no big deal. Maybe some other time."

Ron suddenly looked up as if inspiration had dawned on him. "Hey Hermione, you're a girl."

Hermione looked up in surprise. "Well, good job, Ron! You finally figured that one out."

"No, I mean, well you could go to the ball with me and Ginny could go with Harry." He suggested.

Hermione huffed. "Oh, so now that you suddenly realize that I'm a girl I can become a last resort for a date? I don't think so, Ronald. Besides, I already have a date!" She stormed up the staircase as Ron stared after her.

"She's lying. She's just mad because I didn't ask her right away." Ron muttered.



Ginny shook her head. "No, she's not. Neville asked her to go but she already had a date so he asked me instead and I said yes."

Harry looked at her in surprise as Ron headed up the stairs to his dormitory. "Neville? What about Michael?"

Ginny shrugged. "He still hasn't asked me yet so I'm going to go with Neville. We're just going as friends and he promised to help me make Michael incredibly jealous."

Harry grinned. "You have no pride."

She laughed. "Sure I do."

He turned at the sound of giggling and saw Lavender and Parvati step into the portrait hole. He jumped to his feet and headed over there. "Hello. Parvati, I was wondering if you would like to go to the ball with me."

She smiled at him. "Alright then."

He grinned. "Hey listen, you wouldn't happen to know of anyone who would like to go with Ron would you?"

Lavender shrugged. "I'm going with Dean."

Parvati nodded. "My sister Padma might. She's in Ravenclaw. I can ask her."

Harry grinned. "Thanks, I'd appreciate that."

He grinned to himself as he headed up to the dormitory ... that hadn't been so hard.

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On Christmas morning, Harry woke up to Ron shouting to him. He sat up and put his glasses on.

“Oy, presents!” Ron replied.

Harry grinned as he glanced at the large pile at the end of his bed. He opened the first one and found a book titled: *Quidditch teams of Britain and Ireland* from Hermione; from Ron he got a bag of Dungbombs; from Ginny he got a red velvet covered diary with a note informing him that it was enchanted so that only he could read what was inside and that she thought he might want to start writing down all of his adventures; from Sirius he got a penknife; from Remus he got a book on physical strength; from Hagrid he got Bertie Botts Every Flavour Beans, Chocolate Frogs, Drooble’s Best Blowing Gum, and Fizzing Whizzbees; from Mrs. Weasley he got his usual package of some homemade goods and a homemade jumper; and from James he got a few more novels and new case to keep his broom in.

They spent the day outside, getting into a snowball fight with Fred, George, Katie, Angelina, Lee Jordan, and Alicia Spinnet. Ginny, Colin, and Demelza agreed to help Harry, Ron, and Hermione but they were destroyed anyway. The girls went in to begin getting ready as Ron grumbled about Hermione not really having a date. He was still furious that she refused to tell him who her date was. He had even gotten desperate enough to ask Ginny who informed him that it was none of his business and that Hermione would tell him when she was ready to tell him.

They dressed in their dress robes and made sure that their hair was brushed as best as possible before they headed down the stairs. Harry took a seat in the common room to wait for his date. Parvati came down within five minutes. She wore a dress of bright pink and her hair was pinned only partly back. She smiled at him.

“Hello Harry.”

He grinned. “You look great, Parvati.”

She beamed at him. “Thanks. Padma said that she’d meet Ron in the entrance hall.”

He nodded and they headed down stairs. Ron headed over to Padma and they made their way into the hall. Harry waited patiently in front

of the closed doors with Parvati. "I'm a little nervous," he confessed.

She grinned. "Don't worry about it, Harry, it will be alright. Besides, we'll only be dancing for about thirty seconds and then everyone else will be invited to join in."

He nodded. "That's reassuring." She laughed as he turned and gasped. Parvati followed his eyes.

"She looks beautiful."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, she does."

Hermione came down the stairs in a dress of forget-me-not blue. It had spaghetti straps and was long and full in the skirt. She wore a white wrap around her shoulders and her hair was sleek and straight, pinned up in a French twist. To Harry's surprise, it was Viktor Krum who extended his hand to her and kissed it as she came down the stairs.

"I guess we found her mystery date."

Parvati nodded. "Viktor Krum? He's so much older though! I mean, he's eighteen!"

"Well, Hermione is fifteen. Her birthday is at the end of September ... but I know what you mean, he's so much older and it's not only in years."

Parvati sighed. "She looks beautiful. I wonder why she doesn't bother to make herself so lovely on a normal basis."

Harry shrugged. "She always looks fine to me."

She sighed. "That's because you're a guy."

He shrugged again as he watched Cho come down in a dress of white and gold as she took Cedric's hand. He ignored the little tug of jealousy and focused on his date instead. The doors opened and they entered, opening the ball with a waltz. He took one of Parvati's

hands in his and placed the other on her waist. Parvati led Harry through the waltz carefully, but he found that he did enjoy it. After the opening waltz, they made their way up to the champion table. Dumbledore instructed them how to order their food and they sat up there and ordered. Harry turned to Hermione almost right away.

“Hermione, you look beautiful! Parvati and I were impressed.”

Hermione blushed. “Thanks. It’s Sleekeasy’s Hair Potion. But it’s too much work to do it every day.”

Harry grinned. “And Viktor Krum?”

She blushed again. “He asked me in the library.”

Viktor was currently trying to gain his date’s attention back so Harry turned to Parvati. “The food is good, eh?”

She laughed. “Yeah it is.”

“I kind of wish we didn’t have to sit up here though, I’d rather be down there with everyone else.”

Parvati shrugged. “After the meal we can go.”

The meal went by quickly and then the Weird Sisters were introduced and the music began. Parvati dragged Harry out onto the dance floor almost immediately. Dancing was more fun than he realized. And it didn’t take as much work as he thought. He just had to move his hips and his feet a bit in time to the music. Parvati helped him out from time to time. He grinned when Dean came over.

“Hey Harry, trade you partners for a dance?”

Harry shrugged as he found himself dancing with Lavender. She looked really pretty as well in a bright red dress. “You look pretty, Lavender.”

She smiled at him. “Thanks, Harry!”

After Lavender, Harry managed to catch a dance with Hermione as Viktor scowled at him. "I finally get you alone and your date is glaring at me."

Hermione laughed. "He is not! So are you mad at me for going with Viktor?"

"No of course not, why would you think that?"

Hermione shrugged. "Because he is in competition with you in the tournament."

"I'm not mad. I think that it's neat that you attended the ball with Krum. Not too many people can claim that one. It will be a story to tell your grandkids." He replied with a grin.

She laughed as Viktor cut in again and Harry made his way over to table where Ron was scowling darkly at Hermione and Krum. Padma was sitting next to him, rolling her eyes.

"Ron, why aren't you out dancing?" He asked.

Padma nodded. "That's what I would like to know!"

Harry ignored her. "Ron?"

Ron shrugged. "Look at her with him! What is she trying to pull?"

Harry didn't have to ask who as he could see the green waves of jealousy spilling off of Ron. But he was surprised to see it. He remembered his Da telling him that he thought Ron and Hermione liked each other in more than a friendly manner. It seemed he had been right, at least about Ron. "She's just dancing and having fun. Like you should be doing. Look you've got one of the most beautiful girls in the school as your date and you're just sitting here pouting."

Padma nodded and tugged Ron up to his feet. "Come on, Ron, let's go dance."

Ron sighed as he let Padma drag him out to the dance floor. Harry

ordered a cup of punch from the menu on the table and gulped it down. Parvati was dancing somewhere in the pile of people. He grinned as he saw Neville dragging Ginny off the dance floor.

"I'm so sorry, Gin, I swear."

She only smiled at him. "It's alright, Neville. I just need to rest a while is all."

Harry grinned. Ginny looked beautiful as well he thought. She wore a dress in a dark brown and gold that brought out the colour of her eyes. Her hair was pinned up in a sleek French twist like Hermione's. "Hey guys, having fun?"

Neville shrugged. "I keep stepping on Gin's toes. I feel guilty."

Harry laughed. "Do you mind if I dance with your date, Neville?"

"Nah, go ahead."

"Would you dance with me, Gin?"

Ginny smiled at him. "Sure." She followed Harry out onto the dance floor for the slow song. "Thanks for rescuing me. Neville's killing all of my toes."

He laughed. "No problem. I lost Parvati somewhere in the middle of the dance floor anyway. So, any sign of Corner yet?"

She shrugged. "I thought he liked me, I mean he was flirting with me and everything but he never asked me to the ball." She sighed. "He's standing just over there, watching me."

Harry looked over at the dark haired bloke and gestured him forward when Ginny wasn't looking. "I think he wants to dance with you."

"I doubt it."

He grinned. "Well, he's on his way over here."

Michael stopped in front of them. "Ginny, can I cut in?"

Harry grinned. "Sure." He stepped back and let Michael step into the dance. He noticed Parvati dancing with Seamus. He grinned and made his way over to them. "Hey Finnigan, mind if I cut in?"

Seamus shook his head. "Of course not. I just offered to keep her company while you danced with Ginny." He scooped up a nearby girl and began to dance with her.

Parvati laughed. "He's crazy. You should see the way he just scoops up a dance partner."

Harry shrugged. "He is yes." A slow song came on and Harry pulled her close to him for the dance. They stayed close as they danced in silence. Harry thought it felt nice to hold her close to him like that. Her arms were wrapped around his neck and his hands sat comfortably around her waist. As if he had planned it the entire time, he tilted his head and brushed his lips gently against hers. He pulled away and gave her a small smile.

Parvati grinned and stood on her toes to kiss him softly. The kiss only lasted a few seconds and when they pulled apart, they grinned at each other and then they busted out laughing.

"Harry ... I don't want to sound rude or anything but I ..." She trailed off as if she was unsure as to what to say.

He nodded. "I didn't feel much out of that either. It was very er ... platonic?"

She laughed and nodded. "Yeah it was. That was the word I was looking for."

He grinned. "Well, I guess we'll just stay friends then."

She grinned back as the music sped up and Harry enjoyed another dance with Parvati, dancing late into the night.

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## **Chapter 20: The Second Task**

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XX – The Second Task**

Harry was walking back to the common room with his arm casually draped around Parvati's waist. "I think that my feet are going to fall off."

She laughed and leaned closer to him. "Mine too. I can't believe that we danced straight through. It's almost two in the morning."

"I can't believe that we were actually allowed to stay out so late."

She grinned. "True. Though I don't think that Padma had as much of a good time. Ron was very grouchy through most of the night even though he did eventually get up and dance."

Harry shrugged. "Well, I don't know what his problem was. He was pretty grouchy throughout most of the night."

Parvati sighed. "It's so obvious, Harry. He was jealous of Viktor Krum. Didn't you notice that he was staring at Hermione almost all night? She looked beautiful."

Harry was about to comment when the portrait door swung open and he was rewarded to the very subject of his conversation.

"WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN, RON?"

Ron's face was red as he yelled back. "IT MEANS THAT YOU WERE FRATERNIZING WITH THE ENEMY, HERMIONE!"

"THE ENEMY?"

"YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE HARRY'S FRIEND! YET HERE YOU



ARE GOING TO THIS BALL WITH SOMEONE WHO HE IS COMPETING AGAINST! DID YOU HELP HIM OUT WITH HIS CLUE TO THE EGG? WHAT DID HE WANT TO KNOW, HOW FAR HARRY WAS IN THE COMPETITION? DID YOU GIVE AWAY ALL OF THE SECRETS?"

Tears welled up in Hermione's eyes now but she held them back. "HOW DARE YOU ACCUSE ME OF SUCH A THING? OF COURSE I WOULD NEVER BETRAY HARRY THAT WAY! AND FOR YOUR INFORMATION WE DIDN'T TALK ABOUT THE TOURNAMENT, NOT ONCE!"

But Ron was on a roll now and he ignored the tears that Hermione furiously blinked back. "WELL, THEN HE OBVIOUSLY ONLY WANTED ONE THING, HERMIONE! AND BY THE WAY THAT YOU'RE DRESSED I'D SAY THAT YOU PROBABLY GAVE IT TO HIM! YOU LOOK LIKE SOME KIND OF A TRAMP! KRUM WAS PROBABLY ALL OVER YOU THE ENTIRE EVENING!!"

Ginny had just walked into the portrait hole now with Neville and Harry felt her grab his arm and he could see the anger vibrating from her. She had obviously only heard the last part of the scene.

"YOU THINK THAT I'M A TRAMP? OH THAT'S RICH, RON! FINE, THINK WHATEVER YOU WANT! BUT I HAPPEN TO THINK THAT I LOOKED VERY NICE TONIGHT!"

"YEAH, FOR A SCARLET WOMAN!" Ron bellowed.

Harry stepped forward now, shoving Ginny at Parvati so that she wouldn't jump up and punch Ron herself. Though he wasn't sure if he was going to hit him himself or what.

"YOU KNOW WHAT, RON! IF YOU HAD SUCH A BLOODY PROBLEM WITH ME GOING TO THE BALL WITH SOMEONE ELSE DRESSED LIKE THIS THEN YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST ASKED ME TO GO WITH YOU YOURSELF AND NOT AS A LAST RESORT!!" She cried out before she ran up the stairs, tears streaming down her cheeks.

"That's ... beside the point. That has nothing do with anything," Ron muttered to himself as he watched her flee.

Ginny and Parvati ran up the stairs after her so Harry turned to Ron. "What the hell is your problem, mate?"

Ron glared at Harry and started to make his way up the dormitory stairs, but Harry followed him.

"No, I'm serious, what the hell is your problem? Calling Hermione both a tramp and a scarlet woman? I should punch you twice on principle."

Ron shrugged. "I didn't mean to call her that, it just ... sort of came out."

Harry snorted. "I bet. Listen, she was not fraternizing with the enemy in any way! Did it ever occur to you that Krum might like her for who she is? She looked beautiful tonight! She said that he asked her out when she was in the library. And of course she wouldn't help him with the golden egg, Ron. She loves me. She wouldn't betray me like that and she wouldn't betray you like that either."

"Loves you does she? Well, then why the hell didn't she go to the ball with you?" Ron exclaimed. "If everything is so bright and dandy then why the hell didn't you just ask her out yourself?"

"Don't be daft! Hermione and I are nothing like that you prat! She's like a sister to me. I love her the way that you love Ginny. And if you hurt her ever again I won't hesitate to punch you, best mate or not."

Ron began to undress now as he searched around for his pyjamas. "Whatever Harry, I'll apologize to her, alright?"

Harry nodded as he found his pyjama bottoms as well. "Good, you better."

Their conversation was interrupted by Dean, Neville, and Seamus coming in. They all said goodnight and got ready for bed. But Harry didn't go to sleep, he instead thought back to what Ron had said

about the clue for the golden egg. Harry had definitely not even checked out the clue yet. He had opened it during the party in Gryffindor Tower after the Marauders had left and it had made a loud screeching sound. He had quickly shut the lid as the sound had been terrible! But he had no idea what the clue meant. He closed his eyes and decided that tomorrow he would check it out again and spend some time actually trying to figure it out. After all, he didn't know how much more he could take of Hermione nagging him to do it. Then he closed his thoughts off as much as he could and drifted off to sleep.

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The next morning, Harry woke up early. He showered and got dressed before he headed down to breakfast. He had only gotten maybe four hours of sleep but he was wide awake. He sat down at the table and grinned up at Hedwig as she landed on his shoulder. He took the letter from her leg and gave her a little bit of toast before handing her an owl treat, which he habitually carried in his pocket for her. He opened the letter and grinned as he read:

**Dear Harry,**

**Hope your Christmas went well and that you enjoyed the Yule Ball. You took Parvati Patil, didn't you? That dark-haired beauty who Sirius says he caught you staring at randomly in the common room a few months ago? I hope that you had fun.**

**Our Christmas here went pretty well. We woke up early and acted like little kids, opening all our gifts. Foolish thought that it was hilarious and kept chasing the wrapping paper (I thought that he would grow out of that as a puppy but apparently not). Anyway, thanks for the great gifts you sent us. I was especially pleased with my *Weasleys Wizard Wheezes* products. When those two ever get around to actually opening a store they're going to make a fortune! Molly will realize eventually that opening a joke shop is a respectable job as well. It just might take a while.**

**I've heard some interesting things lately. Like the most important one being that Barty Crouch seems to have taken ill.**

He hasn't been in the office for quite some time, which is very unusual for Crouch. I don't think that he's ever even taken a vacation. Percy Weasley has apparently taken his place for the time being. But I still find it odd. Especially with him working the tournament and all that jazz. Well, another reason I wrote was due to the tournament.

Remus, Sirius, and I looked into that noise you told us about that came out of your golden egg and Remus pretty much recognized it right away. (Good idea by the way to send the noise through in a Howler, clever). Anyway, we looked into it anyway just to make sure that we were right and yes Moony had it right. He says that the sound is mermaids. That is the sound of their voices when they sing above the ground. However, they can sing beautifully below the lake. So Moony suggests that you take a bath and put the egg under the water. He says that you should then hear the clue and not screeching.

Well, tell me what you find out and we'll go from there.

Love,  
Da

Harry re-read the letter a second time, his grin broadening. All he had to do was put the egg under the water? That didn't seem too hard. He finished up his breakfast, tucking the letter in his pocket. He would go get the egg now. He was halfway up the stairs when he remembered that he didn't have anywhere to listen to it ... after all he would wake everyone up if he listened in the bathroom. Then he grinned ... his trunk had a bathroom!

He began to hurry towards the common room and he bumped headlong into Cedric. He managed to steady himself but he still wasn't pleased to see him. This was the guy who had taken Cho to the ball and was now standing next to her, holding her hand.

"Sorry, I was in a hurry." Harry replied.

Cedric nodded. "No problem. Can I talk to you for a minute?"

Harry shrugged. "Sure."

Cedric turned to Cho. "Hey, I need to talk to Harry for a minute, do you mind waiting for me in the Great Hall?"

She gave him a look that clearly stated; *how dare you ask me to leave?* But then she smiled and headed in the other direction.

"What's up?" Harry asked.

"Listen Harry, I just wanted to thank you for telling me about the dragons. If it wasn't for you I would have been a goner in that first task."

Harry shrugged. "It was no problem. You would have done the same for me."

Cedric grinned. "That's it exactly. You see ... well, when you open your egg does it make this screeching sound?"

Harry nodded. He wondered if Cedric had already figured out the clue. "Yeah."

"If you listen to it under the water, the clue makes sense."

Harry nodded. "Alright, thanks."

Cedric grinned. "No problem. See you later and good luck on the next task."

Harry watched him leave and he hurried upstairs to get his egg out of his trunk. Once he had the egg in his hand, he opened the trunk to the appropriate compartment and then he stepped inside, pulling the lid down behind him. He turned on the lights as he went into the bathroom. He sat the egg down on the ledge of the shower and quickly undressed before turning the water on high and opening the egg. It screeched horribly until he placed it under the shower head and then he listened to the voices that echoed off the walls.

*Come seek us where our voices sound,  
We cannot sing above the ground,  
And while you're searching, ponder this;  
We've taken what you'll sorely miss,  
An hour long you'll have to look,  
And to recover what we took,  
But past an hour – the prospect's black  
Too late, it's gone, it won't come back.*

He listened a few more times until he memorized it before he stepped out of the shower to dry off and to write it down on a piece of parchment. Once he had it written down he quickly got dressed again before he headed into the kitchen area and took a seat at his kitchen table with the parchment sitting on the table in front of him.

He had some more parchment where he began to make notes. If Moony was right and it was mermaids a.k.a. merpeople who had sung the song then to seek them he would have to go into the lake. That thought did not cheer him up any. He could swim of course. He was actually quite good and very fast. His Da had taught him when he was younger since they did have both an indoor pool and an outside pool. But swimming in the lake would surely be different. First of all, the lake was Merlin only knew how deep and if he had to find the merpeople then they were probably right at the bottom. How would he get down there and still be able to breathe? He would have an hour to search according to the clue so that meant that he would hardly have enough time to search and come up for air about a million times.

He sighed as he took out another blank piece of parchment to write to James. Maybe the Marauders would be able to help him.

*Dear Da, Uncle Sirius, and Uncle Remus,*

*Uncle Moony was right – they sing under the water. Cedric found out as well and just as I was heading upstairs to put it under he cornered me and suggested I do the same thing. Well, this is the clue:*

Come seek us where our voices sound,

We cannot sing above the ground,

*This is clearly the part of them being merpeople and living under the lake right?*

And while you're searching, ponder this;  
We've taken what you'll sorely miss,

*What will I miss the most? I have this image of them with my broomstick in my mind and just taunting me with it. It's not fun.*

An hour long you'll have to look,  
And to recover what we took,

*Okay, an hour is understandable, but how will I breathe?*

But past an hour – the prospect's black  
Too late, it's gone, it won't come back.

*So if I can't find it in an hour I'm done, no chances left? I somehow have to breathe under the Black Lake for an hour??? I have no idea how I am going to do that one!!!*

*Everyone is still sleeping here because of the ball last night. I didn't sleep much, don't know why, I just woke up. So I can't show anyone this yet. But as soon as they wake up we're going to begin researching and hopefully we'll be able to find something.*

*And about the ball – your hints about Parvati were far from subtle. No, I am not dating her. We just went to the ball as friends. She is very beautiful yes, but we kissed and it was friendly nothing else. We decided that we we're better off as friends. The ball was a lot of fun, we danced almost all night – Uncle Sirius was right, dancing isn't so hard.*

*Ron and Hermione did get into this huge fight though! Ron was ... well insanely jealous that Hermione went to the ball with Viktor Krum. I think that you were right Da, they do like each other. But I don't think Ron realized that until last night. He called her a tramp and a scarlet woman and I told him that if he doesn't apologize to her today that I'm*

*going to punch him. I was pretty close to hitting him last night. I've come to love Hermione like a sister and if Ron hurts her again well, I'm going to have to hurt him.*

*And the thing about Mr. Crouch is interesting. He wasn't at the ball you know, Percy took his place. I did find that odd.*

*Also – I'm in my trunk!*

*I just realized when I went to go put the egg under the water that I couldn't use the bathroom because it would surely wake everyone up. Then I remembered that I had a bathroom in my trunk! Now I'm sitting at my own kitchen table. It's so cool, I forgot about it completely. But now I'm here and it's brilliant! Well, I'm going to head to the common room now and wait for everyone to wake up. Tell me if you can help come up with anything that will enable me to breathe under water for an hour.*

*Love,  
Harry*

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Once the vacation finished, classes continued pretty much the same. Ron and Hermione were speaking again but they still seemed to be walking on eggshells around each other. Harry figured that it was only a matter of time before one of them exploded. He had told them about the clue as soon as they were awake and talking again. They had immediately hit research mode and began to search for ways to breathe under water. But so far they had come up empty handed. James continued to write back and forth but they hadn't really come up with anything either. Harry's only way of getting through it was to constantly remind himself that he had two months ... a month and a half ... one month.

January was blistery and cold and it was long. Especially without their favourite teacher ... Hagrid. Rita Skeeter had obviously not been pleased that when she had interviewed Hagrid about the Skrewts he hadn't told her anything bad about Harry, which is what she had really been looking for. In revenge, she had somehow found out about



Hagrid's past and written an article about it in the *Daily Prophet*.

Hagrid was half-giant. Giants were not well-liked in the wizarding community as they were rumoured to be vicious and mean-tempered. They like killing too much. His mother was an especially terrible giantess, Fridwulfa who terrorized. Hagrid had been incredibly embarrassed and depressed over Rita's information and began to stay in his cabin all of the time. Professor Grubbly-Plank began to take over his lessons. Malfoy thought that it was hilarious and was constantly taunting Harry about Hagrid.

Eventually, Harry, Ron, and Hermione were fed up and they went to go visit Hagrid. After a lot of banging on the door and swearing and saying not-so-nice things about Rita Skeeter, to their surprise, Professor Dumbledore opened the door. The conversation had gone quickly after that but Dumbledore basically insisted that Hagrid was to come back to class.

If that wasn't bad enough, Harry had caught himself in quite an interesting situation a few weeks later. He had decided to go for stroll with the egg and the clue in the middle of the night to see if he could figure something out. Well, it was his bad luck that he happened to notice that the missing Mr. Barty Crouch was snooping around Snape's office. Harry headed upstairs to see why, hiding under his cloak with the map tightly in his hand, and managed to be too distracted and he hit the trick stair. He had yelped in pain as his foot got caught. His situation only worsened when he dropped the egg and it had bounced down the stairs, opening at the bottom and screeching loudly. The map fell down a few more stairs. Filch had come running, followed by Snape and Moody. They all began talking and questioning. Harry had somehow managed to get Moody on his side (whose magical eye could see through invisibility cloaks) but Moody had wanted to borrow the map. Since Moody had stopped him from getting detention, Harry figured that it was the least he could do. But he made sure to inform Moody that Barty Crouch had been the one in Snape's office.

Harry told Ron and Hermione about what had happened with Moody and Ron and Harry begin to speculate that maybe Snape put his name in the Goblet. Hermione had gotten angry at this and told them

that Snape had not done so because every time they think it's him they are completely off course.

Harry continued to have his animagus lessons with Professor McGonagall and he finally managed to achieve another break through in the first week of January. He had managed to change both of his arms into phoenix wings. McGonagall had been extremely impressed. She told him that he now had to work on changing his head and if he managed that he would be able to transform very soon. Harry began to wish however that one of his animals was able to breathe under water.

They still were not getting any closer in research. McGonagall had even given Harry a permission slip to use the Restricted Section of the library but they were turning up nothing. Harry was beginning to panic by the evening of the second task. He still had nothing. He also had no idea what the merpeople were going to take from him.

Fred and George came and took Ron and Hermione away from Harry, apparently on McGonagall's orders and Harry panicked. Did she think that he was cheating by having them help him? He grabbed as many books as he could and headed back to common room. If he didn't find something by morning, he was going to have to tell them that he couldn't do the task.

Ginny smiled up at him when he walked in. "Hey Harry, I've been looking for you."

He managed a small smile for her. "Sorry, I've been busy."

She grinned. "It's alright; it's just that poor Hedwig has been trying to deliver you a letter. She let me take it to give to you." She replied as she handed him the parchment.

Harry nodded. "Thanks." He took the parchment and ripped it open.

**Harry,**

**I think I have an idea to help you. Call me as soon as you get this.**

**Da**

Harry shoved the parchment into his pocket as he glanced at his watch. It was almost two o'clock in the morning. Ginny was the only other person in the common room and since she knew about the mirror he pulled it out of his pocket and said his father's name. James' face appeared in the mirror.

"Da, please tell me you actually have something!" Harry said desperately as Ginny took a seat next to him on the couch.

James nodded. "I can't believe that I didn't think of it before. But the Bubble Head Charm."

Harry groaned. He had in fact found that charm but he couldn't produce it. It was seventh year charms and he just couldn't do it. "I've been trying to learn that all week. I can't get it!"

James nodded. "That's what I was afraid of. But I do have one more idea."

"What?"

"Gillyweed."

"What's that?" Harry asked.

"It's a rare water plant. If you eat it, it's supposed to allow you to breathe under water for an hour."

Harry's face lit up. "Where can I find that?"

James sighed. "Well, that would be the tricky part. Snape would have some in his private stores."

"How am I supposed to get it then?" Harry groaned.

James grinned. "Dobby."

"Dobby? The house elf?"

James nodded. "Harry, Dobby respects you more than anything and I know that Dumbledore gave him a job there. He would get it for you. Just ask him. I'll see you tomorrow after the task. Good luck."

His face disappeared from the mirror as Harry glanced at Ginny. "Do you really think that Dobby would just get it for me?"

Ginny shrugged. "It's worth a try. Go down to the kitchens and talk to him."

Harry nodded. "Alright, want to come with me?"

She grinned. "Sure. But you better get your cloak."

Harry ran up the stairs to grab his invisibility cloak and came back down. He wrapped it over both him and Ginny before they left the portrait hole and headed down to the picture of the pear. Harry tickled the pear and the portrait opened, allowing them into the kitchens.

"Excuse me, but I'm looking for Dobby?" Harry asked a nearby elf.

The elf pointed to the far corner where Dobby was sitting with Winky. Harry and Ginny made their way over to Dobby and Dobby brightened when he saw Harry.

"Harry Potter, sir, what is you doing here?"

Harry grinned. "Hey Dobby, how are you?"

Dobby grinned. "Good, sir, but Winky is still depressed, sir. What can I do for you, sir?"

Harry sighed as he knelt down in front of the elf. "Dobby, I want to ask you to do something for me that's very important and related to the second task tomorrow."

Dobby nodded. "Of course, sir."

Harry launched into the explanation of the gillyweed and what his Da

had told him. Then he explained how it is in Snape's office which was a problem.

Dobby nodded. "I would be glad to get it for you, sir!"

Harry grinned. "Really?"

Dobby grinned. "Really. I will bring it to you tomorrow morning."

Harry sighed in relief. "Thanks Dobby, I owe you one!"

Harry and Ginny headed back to the common room after that, loaded up with butterbeers. To their surprise, Ron and Hermione had not returned yet.

"I wonder where Ron and Hermione are."

Ginny shrugged. "I don't know. Maybe they finally found a broom closet together."

Harry laughed. "I doubt it."

She yawned loudly. "Well, I'm going to head up to bed. I promised Michael that I'd meet him in the entrance hall to head out to the lake for the second task."

Harry nodded. "You two are an item now, eh?"

She grinned. "Yeah. He's really sweet." She stood on her toes to kiss his cheek. "Goodnight Harry and good luck in the task tomorrow."

He nodded as he watched her head up the stairs, but instead of going to sleep, he sat down on the couch. Now he just had to hope that Dobby would pull through.

He was shaken awake what felt like minutes later but the sunlight was coming through the windows so it had obviously been hours. He turned to see Dobby there.

"Dobby, did you get it?"

Dobby held out his hand which had a slimy green plant on it. "I is Harry Potter, sir. You must hurry and find your Wheezy."

"My ... Ron?"

Dobby nodded. "They is taking your Wheezy down to the bottom of the lake. The task is starting soon, you must go."

Harry stared at Dobby in shock. "They took Ron?"

"Go!" Dobby exclaimed.

Harry didn't wait any longer. He hurried upstairs to change into his bathing trunks before he ran out of the school and down to the lake. He was obviously extremely late as the stands had already filled almost to the brim. He was breathing heavily as he tried to catch his breath. He decided on the spot that he was going to start running every day as he obviously needed to get into shape if he was out of breath from the run through the castle to the lake.

He listened as Bagman's magnified voice explained to everyone what the champions were supposed to do. When the whistle sounded, Harry shoved the gillyweed into his mouth chewing. He gasped when slits made themselves known in the sides of his neck and he realized that he couldn't breathe. He dived into the lake, he had gills. He took a deep breath of lake water and began to make his way down to the bottom of the lake ...

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James, Sirius, and Remus all rushed to Harry's aid when he came out of the lake, coughing up water. He was almost an hour over the time limit. James' arms came around him with a warm blanket as he shivered in the February light. Madam Pomfrey shoved some type of potion down his throat and just as he swallowed he found his arms suddenly full of Hermione. She was murmuring something about him figuring it out and doing it. He grinned at her and hugged her back as Viktor glared at them.

The announcement was made. Ron and Hermione looked at Harry in shock as Dumbledore said that Harry had been the first of the champions to find his way down to the merpeople but he was the last one up because of his determination to free all of the hostages. He was awarded extra points for this and was now tied in first place with Cedric.

Fleur approached him, kissing his cheeks and thanking him over and over again for rescuing Gabrielle, her sister. Harry blushed in embarrassment as James laughed. Every time someone let him go, he found himself embraced in James' arms again.

"Da, let go, I'm fine!" Harry protested.

James nodded as he pulled back. "I know. But I was so worried when you didn't come out. I thought something had ... damn it, Harry! Don't ever scare me like that again!"

Harry grinned. "I'll try not to."

Bagman approached him then. "Harry, I just wanted to congratulate you and to inform you that the final task will take place in June. You will be notified of the task ahead of time."

Harry nodded as he watched him go before turning to James, who still had a protective hand on his shoulder. "Can we go to the party now?"

James laughed and hugged Harry tight again. "Yeah, come on."

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## **Chapter 21: Relationships**

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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## **Chapter XXI – Relationships**

For once, Harry wasn't the only one in the spotlight and it was doing him good. Ron was being stared at in shock and admiration because he had been below the water and had helped Harry bring Gabrielle up. People were always asking him to re-tell the story of what had happened below the lake. At first his story had jibed with everyone else's but then he was going on about fighting the merpeople one handed until Hermione asked him what he had he planned to do ... snore at them to make them go away. Ron had then quickly gone back to the original story line about how he, Hermione, Cho Chang, and Gabrielle Delacour had all been called down to Professor McGonagall's office. Harry thought that the attention was especially good for him because it would no longer give him a reason to be jealous of Harry like Hermione had said he was when Harry had found himself a champion.

Hermione was constantly talked about and she was extremely embarrassed to have been the person that Viktor Krum would miss the most. She would blush when questioned about it and would immediately change the subject. Ron also seemed to have a bit of a problem with the fact that Hermione had been the person that Krum would miss most. His ears would turn a dark red whenever the subject was mentioned but to Harry's surprise, he never commented on it. When Harry had mentioned this to Ginny she had suggested that maybe he didn't want another blow-out like they had had after the Yule Ball.

Fleur Delacour was being extremely nice to Harry now and to Ron as well. She had never not been nice, but she now went out of her way to be more friendly to Harry. Though Harry was grateful to her that she never brought up the fact of Ron's embarrassing way of asking her to the Yule Ball – when he had apparently screamed it out at her – and he was sure that Ron was very grateful as well. Harry thought that she was very nice and extremely friendly. He enjoyed talking with her and learning about her own school. He felt better to know that he was on good terms with at least two out of the three champions.

Viktor Krum didn't have too much to say on the whole Hermione thing and as Hermione was also strangely close-mouthed about it Harry



didn't ask. Krum did try to spend more time with her whenever he could though and whenever Hermione kissed Harry's cheek or hugged him he would shoot glares at him. But Harry didn't mind, it only made him grin to think that he was making Viktor Krum jealous because of the way he acted with his sister. Hermione had apparently found out what he had told Ron after the huge argument they had had after the Yule Ball and she had broken down in his arms, telling him how much she loved him and that she had always loved him as a brother as well. The two of them were closer now, as they were both only children, and Harry didn't mind a bit, especially since Krum didn't seem to understand their relationship. But he figured that he would let Krum think the worse only because he found it so amusing to do so.

Cedric Diggory on the other hand, seemed to be having some problems. Every girl in school kept commenting to him how romantic it was that the person he would miss most was his girlfriend, Cho Chang. Cho on the other hand, didn't seem to find this as great. She always looked miserable, something Harry had a hard time understanding, after all, her boyfriend obviously cared for her deeply; shouldn't that make her happy? But neither one of them had looked too pleased in the weeks since the second task.

Harry was also dealing with one other problem – Rita Skeeter. She had written an article in *Witch Weekly* about Hermione, accusing her of being an awful fame seeker and for playing games with both Viktor Krum and Harry Potter. It said that she was stringing them both along, playing them. The article had also made Harry out to be some kind of tragic depressed hero since Hermione had apparently chosen Krum over him. Hermione had not been offended by this in the least and to the disgust of the Slytherins – who had shown her the article in the first place – continued to go about her daily routine normally. Harry, however, was getting tired of telling people that Hermione was not his girlfriend. He found this highly amusing as well since he and Hermione had only just told each other that they loved one another like a close brother and sister but he still found it annoying.

But the thing that Harry found the most curious was that on the same day that the article about Hermione came out, Karkaroff came into Potions and showed Snape something on his left forearm. It seemed to have made Snape very angry. Harry had immediately told Ron,

Hermione, and Ginny before using his mirror to tell his Da, Sirius, and Remus, but none of them had known what it meant.

Harry pushed his thoughts aside when he heard the shout coming from just ahead of him in the hall. He noticed that there was a small crowd of students gathered around what looked like Cedric and Cho. He made his way across the hall, wondering what was going on. Then he stopped in his tracks, slightly embarrassed to be listening to what was going on.

"Well, I don't think that that's fair!" Cho replied, angrily; her long black hair flying over her shoulder as she threw her hands up in exasperation.

"Well, what do you want me to do about it?" Cedric asked. "It's not my fault that people are bothering you about the tournament, Cho! You should have realized that this would happen when you agreed to date me!"

She huffed. "Well, I didn't think that I would be the topic of hot gossip! All because I was what you would miss most! It's ridiculous!"

Cedric sighed. "Cho, can we go talk about this ... in private?"

She shrugged. "Why, what's wrong with making a scene? After all, we're already the topic of conversation around the entire castle! So why not add some more fuel to the fire?"

He groaned and buried his face in his hands. "This isn't the right time or place, Cho, come on, let's go find somewhere quiet to talk, please?" When she didn't answer fast enough he grabbed her arm. "Come on, I know a good place to go."

Cho jabbed her finger into his chest. "Let go of me, you big brute! I can walk myself! And maybe I don't want to go somewhere alone with you! Maybe I want you to leave me alone!"

"What's that supposed to mean?" He demanded angrily.

"It means that I don't want to see you anymore! I'm tired of this ... and

everything!" She cried out, tears in her eyes.

Cedric lowered his voice considerably so that no one would hear what he said. But the hallway had gone dead silent and his voice still echoed softly along the walls. "Cho, you don't mean that. I love you. Don't you understand that? I want to be with you."

She shook her head no, her eyes brimming with tears. "Well, I don't love you. We're over." Then she turned on her heel, pushing her way through the crowd and disappeared.

Cedric simply stood there a moment then he grabbed his bag and headed in the opposite direction. He looked sad and defeated. Harry felt bad for him. Cho had been really harsh. But at the same time he did understand where she was coming from. It was hard to be the topic of conversation all the time. He had lived with it since he started school. He knew how frustrating it could be and how angry it made you to know that the school was always discussing your life. And it had to be harder for someone who wasn't used to it. He began to make his way down to the great hall when he noticed a familiar dark-haired boy heading in the opposite direction.

"Hey Corner!"

Michael Corner turned around at the sound of his name. He gave a small half-smile to Harry. "Hey Potter, some break-up huh?"

Harry nodded. "Not something you would normally want public."

Michael shook his head. "Definitely not. So what can I do for you?"

Harry shrugged as he caught up to him. "Nothing much, I just wanted to talk to you."

Michael's brow wrinkled slightly. "What about?"

"Ginny."

Michael grinned. "She's great!"

Harry grinned back. "Yeah, she is. Listen, I know that she hasn't told Ron, Fred, or George about dating you so I'm just going to step in their place here. Ginny's a really good friend of mine and I just don't want her to get hurt. I'm also going to warn you that if you do hurt her, you're a dead man and there's nothing that I can do or would do to help you. She's got six older brothers and you would be doomed, mate. What I would do to you would be the least of your worries."

Michael laughed. "Thanks. I know that she hasn't told them yet and I don't even know if she will. Ginny said that she's not too worried about Fred and George as they will just tease her and maybe play a few pranks but she thinks that Ron would be upset."

Harry nodded. "Most likely. You know Ron. I mean he's a great guy and he's my best mate but the one fault that Ron has is that he still views Ginny as his baby sister. I don't think that it's hit him yet that she's not a little girl anymore."

He shrugged. "Yeah, I do know Ron. Look Harry, I really like Ginny. She's cute and pretty and sweet and funny. We get along really well together and I enjoy spending time with her. It took me damn near forever to even get her to go out with me in the first place!"

Harry laughed. "I know. She told me that you had been flirting with her. I remember her mentioning something about it again after the first task and I told her that you were a good guy and to stop making you suffer. I think she had her heart set on you asking her to the ball though."

He sighed. "I know. I thought about it. But then I figured she was just going to say something about us needing to know each other a little better first so I kept postponing it and then the next thing I know I hear she's going with Longbottom. I wanted to kill him."

Harry grinned. "She told me that she was hoping it would make you jealous."

Michael laughed. "Well, it worked. So are we alright?"

Harry nodded. "I think so. I think you're a decent enough bloke,

Corner, but Ginny is a good friend of mine not to mention the sister of my best mate, so if you hurt her I'll have to hurt you, just on principle. I'm sure that you understand."

Michael smirked. "Yeah, I understand. She's got six brothers, you, and Colin. If I hurt her I'm dead."

"Colin?"

"Yeah Creevey. He already gave me the run down. Pretty similar to yours actually. He threatened to beat me within an inch of my life if I so much as make her cry one tear of unhappiness." He said with a grin. "Ginny's lucky to have such great friends. In fact, Hermione Granger told me that if I hurt her she would hex me. Luna Lovegood, from my own house, threatened to send what I think was a snorkack at me, though I'm not positive, if I were to ever even breathe at Ginny wrong; and Demelza Robbins, that first year that Ginny befriended, mentioned something about cutting off my ... well ... my bits with manicure scissors. I did not like the sound of that. So trust me, we're good."

Harry grinned broadly. "I didn't realize that Ginny's friends were so creative. Works for me though."

Michael laughed. "Yeah, well Ginny also gave me an earful herself. Something about a Bat Bogey Hex, whatever that is."

Harry shuddered. "You don't want to know. I have not seen it myself but Ginny has six older brothers and all she has to do is threaten them with that and they all succumb to anything she says. According to Fred and George, her size can be deceiving."

Michael grinned. "I appreciate the warning. Well, I better get going. I'm supposed to meet Ginny in the library in an hour and I still have to grab some dinner. Talk to you later Harry. Oh, and if Ron happens to find out about me and his sister dating would it be too much to ask for a small warning?"

Harry laughed. "I'll think about it. See you around, Corner."

Michael nodded. "See you."

Harry watched him walk away, grinning to himself. Ginny sure was popular. Manicure scissors? He was going to have to have a word with Demelza about that one. He wasn't sure exactly what those were but they sounded bad. He shook the thoughts from his mind and went to find Ron. He owed him a chess match and he was determined to beat him once in his life.

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As the year headed into March, the school's new hot topic of conversation was the public break-up of Cedric and Cho. It had been almost three weeks since the break-up and Harry was beginning to think about asking Cho out again. But he wasn't sure how these things worked and if he was supposed to give her more time to ... get over Cedric, he supposed was the right term. Harry was also beginning to wonder about Mr. Crouch.

According to the newspaper, he still wasn't coming into work. He wrote home to ask his father and he had learned quite a few interesting things. First of all, it had turned out that Crouch had been the one to send Sirius to Azkaban without a trial. Crouch used to be the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. He had deemed the evidence to be against him so the trial had been moot. Harry had been furious at this news. His godfather could have lived a great life at Potter Manor with his family but instead he had been forced to spend twelve years in prison for a crime that he had never even committed. Crouch had been a well-respected man. Everyone had thought that he was going to be the next Minister of Magic. He was extremely outspoken against the Dark Arts and before Voldemort's downfall he had risen quickly throughout the Ministry of Magic. He had ordered harsh measures against Voldemort's supporters. Aurors actually had the power to kill instead of capture and could use the Unforgivables if necessary. Sirius had only been one of many who had been sent to prison without a trial. Harry still did not find this good. It only made him think that the Ministry had been as bad as Voldemort himself. However, Crouch's promising career backfired on him when his own son was accused of supporting Voldemort. Crouch had apparently not even blinked. He put his son

on trial and sent him to Azkaban prison. Barty Crouch Junior died not even a year later.

The other question was Snape. No one seemed to figure out what his role in this was. James, Remus, and Sirius said that he had always been interested in the Dark Arts and that when they were at school he had known more curses and jinxes than anyone else. But as far as they knew he had never been a Death Eater. Most of the Slytherins that Snape used to hang out with in school had become Death Eaters but no one knew about Snape. Karkaroff showing Snape something on his arm only increased their suspicions but none of them really knew what to be suspicious of. Not to mention the fact that no one still seemed to know the whereabouts of Bertha Jorkins.

Harry's mind was deep in these confusing questions as he sat in the courtyard one afternoon with a novel in his hand. He looked up only when a shadow fell across him and to his surprise it was Cho that was standing there.

"Er hi, Cho," he said softly.

She smiled warmly at him. "Hi Harry. What are you reading?"

"*Empires of Sand* by David Ball. What's up?"

She took a seat next to him. "Sounds interesting. And not much really I just saw you sitting here so I thought that I'd come over and keep you company. It's kind of chilly this time of year to be reading outside."

Harry shrugged. "I don't mind."

She sighed. "Well, it just takes all kinds doesn't it, Harry?"

"Huh?"

"Never mind. I'll just show you what I came here for, shall I?"

Before Harry could comment she had leaned in and planted her lips on his. He was so surprised that he didn't do anything for a full thirty

seconds. But she didn't seem to mind. Her hands had gone to the buttons on his cloak, clutching them tightly as her lips brushed his. He kissed her back, wondering how it was possible that he had liked her for so long and here she was kissing him. She pulled away with a small smile on her lips.

"That's better, don't you think?"

Harry could only nod. "Why?"

Cho smirked at him. "Why?" She leaned in to brush her lips across his again and Harry felt all the blood in his brain gush down to his loins. "Surely you can figure that one out on your own."

"That's not what I meant. I meant, why did you kiss me?"

She shrugged. "Well, I like you and I remember that you asked me to go the ball with you. I was kind of hoping that you were still interested." She asked as she leaned closer to him.

Harry bit his lip to keep himself from groaning out loud. Of course he was still interested. Just look at her! She was really pretty with all that dark black hair and she had a terrific body if he did say so himself. She wasn't particularly curvy or anything but it was a brilliant body; a body that was currently pressed pretty close against him.

But then he remembered that Cedric had said he loved her.

"Cho, what about Cedric?"

"What does Cedric have to do with anything? We broke up. I'm a free agent now." She replied.

Harry nodded. "I understand that. But he said that he loved you. And in the second task you were the thing that he would miss the most. That's a big deal."

She shrugged and gave a small pout. "Well, I don't think so. It's not my fault that he's in love with me. I'm not in love with him and nothing is going to change that. What am I suppose to do if the feelings aren't



there? I have feelings for you, now.”

Harry only sighed. He did like her, she was incredibly pretty and he had definitely enjoyed the soft kiss that he had been allowed. It had caused lust to form in his bloodstream. She hadn't tasted sweet like Hannah had or there hadn't been anything there like with Parvati, instead she just incited lust. Cho seemed to be thinking along the same lines because she leaned in and kissed him again. This time a little firmer and she parted his lips for her tongue. He kissed her back, lingering over the feelings of lust that she inspired in him. When she pulled away again he wanted to groan in disappointment.

She grinned. “Harry, what are you doing for the next Hogsmeade trip?”

His eyebrow lifted slightly and he grinned. “I was hoping to take you.”

Cho smiled at him. “Good plan. I'll meet you in the entrance hall at ten a.m. See you around, Harry.”

He watched her go, rubbing a hand over the back of his neck as he wondered what exactly he was getting himself into. He pocketed his book and began to make his way back to Gryffindor Tower when he saw Cedric walking through the hall by himself. That alone was strange enough as he was always surrounded by people.

“Cedric.”

He turned and gave a small wave. “Hey Harry, how are you?”

Harry managed a small smile. “I'm alright, listen I wanted to talk to you.”

Cedric nodded. “About the third task? I have no idea what's coming.”

Harry shook his head. “No not the task. I don't know anything about that either. Actually it was about, well ... er ... Cho.”

Cedric nodded but Harry caught the sudden glimpse of unhappiness in his eyes. “Oh, why?”

"I was there when you guys had that break up and all and well ... she just told me that she ... I'm going to Hogsmeade with her."

Cedric's eyes widened. "She certainly moves fast."

"Listen, I've liked her for a while. I actually asked her to the ball but you beat me to it. However, I like to think that we've become friends of a sort and ... I heard you tell her that you loved her so if you want me to break the date then I will."

Cedric nodded. "That's considerate of you, Harry. What would you say if I told you that I did want you to break that date?"

Harry sighed. "I'd break the date."

Cedric smiled then. "Look Harry, I appreciate the gesture. But Cho and I are no longer together and I know that I don't have the right to say who she gets to go out with. So I'll wish you luck on the date because she's a difficult woman and I have no idea why I'm in love with her."

Harry nodded. "Thanks then. I've never been in love so I can't say I know how it feels, but I think that when it happens you don't have a choice in the matter."

Cedric grinned. "Yeah I think that your right. Besides, I'm going to Hogsmeade with Patricia Stimpson so I guess I can't complain about her having a date. I'll see you around, Harry."

Harry watched him go and he wondered again what exactly he was getting himself into.

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The day of the Hogsmeade trip, Harry made his way down to entrance hall, stopping to talk to Ginny, Michael, Demelza, and Colin. He promised to meet them at the Three Broomsticks later along with Ron, Hermione, Neville, Luna, Lavender, Parvati, Padma, Dean, and Seamus. He noticed Cho standing over by the door so he made his

way over.

“Hi, you look great.”

She grinned. “Thanks, so do you.”

Harry smiled at her. “Are you ready to go?”

She smiled. “Yeah, is there anywhere particular that you have to go?”

“Yes actually, I need to go into Gladrags and get some crazy socks for a friend of mine.” He replied thinking of Dobby. He wanted to repay him for sneaking into Snape’s stores to get that Gillyweed.

“Okay sure.”

They walked out of the castle and into the village in silence. Cho brought up Quidditch but since it wasn’t being played this year with the tournament other than the World Cup, their conversation was limited. They went into Gladrags and Cho began to look at clothes as Harry tried to find the craziest socks he could. He found ones that shrieked when they got too smelly; ones that turned green when they were wet; ones with bells; and a bunch of other socks with crazy pictures on them. He bought about a dozen before he made his way back around to find Cho. She was looking at this black dress.

“Oh, isn’t it gorgeous?” Cho asked.

Harry only shrugged. It looked like a dress to him. “Sure.”

Cho continued to moon after it, sending Harry small looks as if she was hoping he would buy it for her. He wasn’t going to, no matter how long she stood there. He liked her and all but not enough to be buying her expensive gifts, especially on the first date. She seemed to get the hint so they left.

“Have you ever been in here?”

Harry glanced over to where she was pointing. Madam Puddifoot’s was a small café that he knew a lot of couples went to. “No, want to

go in?"

She nodded. "Yes."

He followed her inside and they found a back table. They both ordered some tea and biscuits and then Harry took a look around. "It looks like an explosion." He replied with a laugh in his voice.

The place was painted hot pink and had confetti dripping down everywhere. He didn't know what the occasion was for confetti but it was there. The lights were floating candles and the tables were covered with white lacy table clothes and frilly doilies. He did not think that it was the nicest place.

"It does not. I think it's cute." Cho replied as she glanced around.

Harry decided that it was best not to comment. He grinned when he saw the small redhead that appeared next to him. "Hey Gin!"

Ginny grinned at him. "Hi Harry! Michael just went to order us some hot chocolate and I saw you walk in so I thought I'd say hi. Crazy place eh? It looks like an explosion or something like a party gone wrong! Michael and I couldn't stop giggling when we walked in."

Harry grinned, pleased to know that he wasn't the only one that thought so. "I was just saying that. Gin, do you know Cho Chang? Cho, this is my friend Ginny Weasley."

Ginny smiled warmly at Cho, a cute dimple appearing in her right cheek. "Nice to meet you. Well, I don't want to impose on your date anymore and I can see Michael coming back. Catch you up at the Three Broomsticks, Harry." She waved goodbye and hurried off after Michael to their table.

"The Three Broomsticks?" Cho asked.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I figured we'd swing by there later on and meet up with people. You don't mind, do you?"

She shrugged but she didn't say anything about it. "Wasn't that the

girl that was dragged down into the Chamber of Secrets two years ago? I heard a rumour that she was attacking all the students.”

“Yeah she was and the rumour’s wrong. She wasn’t attacking anyone. But that’s old news.”

Cho nodded. “So are you nervous for the third task?”

Harry easily fell back into conversation with her but he kept getting the feeling that she was angry with him about something. They left Madam Puddifoot’s an hour later and she kissed him softly, giving him a small smile before she dragged him into more stores. The woman looked at everything and anything. As they approached the Three Broomsticks a little after noon, Harry grinned.

“Well, want to go meet some people? I promised Hermione that I would meet up with her and –”

“You’re meeting up with another girl? Isn’t she dating Viktor Krum? Or was that article really right about her stringing the two of you along at once?” Cho demanded.

Harry was surprised by the sudden outburst. “No to everything. Hermione’s just my friend. And it’s not only her I’m meeting. There’s also Ron and Ginny and –”

Cho smirked. “So you’d rather spend time with the ugly redhead and the brain then me?”

“No, that’s not what I meant at all. I just promised them that I –”

“Oh, you promised them? When you already made a date with me?”

Harry sighed. “Well I didn’t think that you would mind, I mean it’s not like I’m ditching you, I just –”

Cho let out a fake laugh. “Ditching me? Oh that’s rich, Potter! Well, let me tell you something! You’ve never had it as good as me and now you’ll never know. See you around!”

She yanked her bags from a surprised Harry's grasp and sauntered off. Harry watched her go with a mixture of shock, relief, and to his surprise, no disappointment. He stepped into the Three Broomsticks and made his way over to where Ron and Hermione were sitting.

"Hey!"

Ron grinned. "Hey Harry! Where's Cho?"

Harry shrugged. "She's gone. I don't even know what the hell happened." He quickly explained everything that had happened since he had asked her out. "Cedric told me she was difficult but this was ... I don't even know. I feel kind of guilty because I'm almost glad to be rid of her."

Hermione sighed. "But I thought that you liked her a lot."

"I did but ... it was all lust and physical attraction. Beyond that ... I really don't like her I guess. She's kind of rude sometimes. Come to think of it, Hedwig hated her on sight so that should have been a clue." Harry replied thoughtfully as he drained the rest of his butterbeer.

Ron laughed. "You've sure had your problems, mate. First Hannah, then Cho ..."

Harry shrugged. "Yeah, but I liked Hannah and that relationship lasted longer than a day."

Hermione grinned. "True. Oh look, here comes everyone else; we better start pushing some tables together."

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## Chapter 22: The Third Task

**Author's Notes:** hey everyone i know this chapter is a little bit rushed but plz forgive me - its the next chapter that will be worth the wait - please review!! newly edited

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## **Chapter XXII – The Third Task**

After the disastrous Hogsmeade date with Cho, Harry decided to swear off of girls for a while. In his mind, they tended to be devilishly sneaky and not even remotely what they seemed. After all, he may have struck one for the home team with Hannah but where the hell had he gone wrong with Cho? She had been nothing like what he had thought she would be like. She was pretty and she was an average Quidditch player but other than that he hadn't seen anything that he found to be worth his while. She was kind of whiny and could really be almost rude sometimes. He was just pretty glad it was over. The only thing that he wondered was why on earth Cedric had fallen in love with her. But he figured that people couldn't always choose who they wanted to be in love with.

His mood only changed slightly, when barely two weeks later he happened to walk by and find Cho and Cedric snogging in a classroom. Obviously the two of them were back together again. He didn't think any more of it until he ran into Cedric in the courtyard a few days later.

"Hey Harry!"

He turned and grinned at Cedric as he hurried towards him. "Hey Cedric, how's it going?"

Cedric shrugged. "Pretty good. Did you get that announcement about the meeting out on the pitch tomorrow?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I wonder what the third task is going to be?"

"I have no idea. Listen Harry, I've been meaning to talk to you."

"About what?"

“Well, I know that you went out with Cho to Hogsmeade when we were on our break and well ... we’re back together now. Is that a problem for you?”

Harry glanced at Cedric in surprise. “No, that’s not a problem for me. We just didn’t click properly, you know? And she wasn’t the person that I thought she was. And to be honest, I don’t know what the hell you see in her?”

Cedric nodded. “I know. Hell, she’s not perfect. She’s whiny and demanding but she can also be really sweet and kind and I love her. I can’t help it. She wasn’t really mad before about everything that had happened with the tournament she was just frustrated. I mean, people were always coming up to me, wanting my autograph or pictures. We were constantly interrupted and if that wasn’t bad enough there was a write up in the paper about us. Neither one of us is used to such attention.”

“Yeah I get that,” Harry replied. “But you just have to learn to ignore the publicity. So does she care about you the same way?”

He blushed a bit. “Yeah, she apologized and told me that she had been a prat and that she was in love with me too. So we’re good now, I think.”

Harry grinned. “Congratulations then, I hope that everything works out for you two. Because Cho and I definitely do not work well together.”

Cedric laughed. “Good to know. Well, I’ll talk to you tomorrow when we hear about the task. See you later.”

“Bye.”

Harry headed back towards the common room, stopping when he heard the sound of Hermione’s voice. He moved towards the sound and pulled open the door of an empty classroom and to his surprise and shock; Hermione was not having a conversation. She was standing on her toes, her hands resting comfortably on Viktor Krum’s hips as they kissed. He quickly closed the door again and quietly



snuck out. That had been the last thing that he had expected to walk in on. He knew that they were dating as they had gone to the ball together and to Hogsmeade once but he hadn't expected that. He wasn't even sure why he found this to be quite a shock, but then again it was Hermione. He sighed; it looked like he had to speak to Viktor. Then he remembered how angry that Ron had been after the ball and he couldn't imagine his best mate's reaction to that one. He headed back up to the common room and took a seat in his favourite chair, lost in thoughts on how Ron was going to react if he ever saw them kissing.

"Fine, don't say hello." Ginny replied, causing him to turn around and grin at her. She was snuggled up to Colin, his arm draped around her with a notebook open in his lap. She looked like she was leaning on him for support and like she was going to fall asleep right there.

"I didn't see you there. Hello Ginny, hey Colin."

Colin grinned. "Hey Harry." He yawned loudly. "Want to quiz us? We've been studying for hours and hours."

"Exams aren't for a month," Harry said in shock.

Ginny laughed. "We know, but we have this system going, pacing ourselves. Right Colin?"

He nodded and planted a loud smacking kiss on the top of her head. "Right-O!"

"We're determined to do incredibly awesome on these exams. So we're starting with our least favourite subject, Potions."

Harry nodded. "Smart. Okay, pass the book here. Since I don't have any exams to take, that's right I am gloating." He said with a grin as Ginny stuck her tongue out at him. "I'm more than willing to try to help you pass."

Colin grinned. "Thanks! Alright, start anywhere you like. The faster we get a bit of this done, the faster Gin here can go snog her boyfriend." He grunted when Ginny's elbow hit him in the stomach. "Jeesh Gin, I

was just saying!"

Harry nodded as he glanced down at Ginny's neat pile of notes. "Alright, what is the difference between a sleeping drought and a sleeping potion?" As he flipped the page over to view the answer, he sighed. It was going to be a long night.

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The meeting for the third task had gone surprisingly well, though both Cedric and Harry had gotten the shock of their lives when they realized what Hagrid was doing to the Quidditch pitch. The third task was going to be a maze that would be filled with small tasks and creatures to get by. All they had to do was find the Cup in the middle. This was right up Harry's alley. He was looking forward to it, just so that it would finally be over.

He noticed Viktor Krum waiting over by the Forbidden Forest and he headed over that way. He had mentioned to him before Bagman had arrived that he wanted to talk to him. He managed a small smile as he stood in front of him. "Hi."

Viktor merely scowled at him. "Hi. I have to ask you something'."

Harry nodded. "Okay, I need to talk to you as well."

"Are you and Herm-o-ninny together?"

Harry grinned. "No, we are not together in the way that you mean. We never have been and we never will be. Hermione is one of my best friends. I love her like a sister. That's it, nothing else."

Viktor grinned broadly then and Harry couldn't help but feel pretty good to know that he had made Viktor Krum a little jealous. "Good. So vat did you vant to talk to me about?"

Harry sighed. "Listen Viktor, I've been meaning to do this for a while but I've just never gotten the chance. Since I love Hermione like a sister and because she is one of my best friends, I just want you to know that I'm looking out for her. And if I hear that you've hurt her in

some way or made her cry, I'll try to find a way to get back at you."

Viktor laughed. "I understand that! I have a sister at home and I feel the same way!"

Harry grinned. "Good. So now that that's out of the way. Are you nervous about the third task?"

He shrugged. "A bit, but not so much no. This will be the end."

He nodded. "I know. That's what I'm waiting for is for it to end. I'm glad that this will be finished after this task. I just want it to be over! But at least this time we have a much better idea of what we're getting ourselves into."

Viktor nodded. "Yes, we do. I've wanted to tell you, during the first task, your flying was wonderful! You are very good."

Harry grinned. "Wow! That's a compliment alright. I play seeker for the Gryffindor Quidditch team. I figured since I'm so much younger than the rest of the champions, my spell work probably wouldn't have been as good, you know? Flying is what I do best."

Viktor smiled. "You are very good. I think that if you wanted, you could play professionally when you are done school."

Harry goggled at him. "Really?"

He nodded. "Yes."

They both turned at the sound of shuffling leaves. Harry immediately lit his wand as it was starting to get dark.

"What is it?"

"Shh, I heard a sound."

Harry moved closer and he gasped in surprise when Mr. Crouch came out of the forest. His clothes were wrinkled and torn. He looked like he had been traveling for days. He also seemed to be completely

delirious. He was standing there seemingly having a conversation with Percy Weasley, who wasn't even there.

"Isn't he from your Ministry?" Krum asked.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I wonder what he's doing here. Mr. Crouch, Mr. Crouch, I'm Harry Potter."

This seemed to stop Mr. Crouch's rambling for a moment. Then all of a sudden he fell to his knees in front of Harry and started to speak in a panicked voice. He said that he had done a terrible thing, that he was paying for it now, that Harry Potter was in trouble, and that he needed to speak to Dumbledore immediately. Harry merely nodded. Once he finally managed to drag himself away from the man, he turned to Viktor.

"Listen, you stay here and watch him. I know where Dumbledore's office is. I can find him quicker. I'll be right back."

Viktor only nodded as Harry bolted back to the castle.

By the time that he returned to the scene with Dumbledore (which had taken a lot longer than necessary considering that he had run into Snape and he had tried to stop him from seeing Dumbledore) both Viktor and Mr. Crouch were gone. A few minutes later, they found Viktor stunned in the forest but no Mr. Crouch. Apparently the man had stunned Viktor and then bolted. Moody had shown up to help after running into Snape but they didn't find a sign of Mr. Crouch.

When Harry returned to the common room he still wasn't sure what had happened. He quickly explained everything to Ron and Hermione (though leaving out the part about what he and Viktor talked about as he didn't think that Hermione would approve). They all began to speculate on what had actually happened. Ron's scenarios all seemed to involve Viktor doing something to Mr. Crouch and then stunning himself. Hermione was not pleased.

After writing a detailed letter to the Marauders about what had happened, Harry began to concentrate on the upcoming tasks. Ron and Hermione helped him research spells and jinxes and curses and

he practiced day in and day out. When Ginny found out what they were doing she offered to help as well. Though they all noticed that Hermione seemed to be busy researching for something else as well.

Hermione had been unusually close-mouthed ever since the article about her in *Witch Weekly*. She had subscribed to both *Witch Weekly* and the *Daily Prophet* in an attempt to figure out what was going on before the Slytherins. But now she was constantly getting hate mail from people who couldn't believe how "badly" she would treat Harry. The only thing that she would say was that Rita Skeeter was somehow listening into private conversations and that she was determined to find out how.

Harry also noticed that Ron seemed to be disappearing for long periods of time and then he would deny it. He wondered what kind of secret Ron was keeping from him, especially so late in the year. But Ron's secret was answered when Harry walked in on him snogging Padma Patil in an empty classroom. Harry had not expected that. He had no idea that Ron and Padma had liked each other that much. Ron had grudgingly danced with her but his mind and his eyes had all been for Hermione. So when Ron came up to the dormitory that evening, Harry decided to ask him about it.

"Hey Harry, did you find out any other spells and stuff tonight?" Ron asked as he searched his trunk for some pyjamas.

Harry nodded. "A few more yeah. Ron, listen, I want to ask you something."

"Sure, what's up, Harry?"

Harry sighed. "Look, I don't know how to say this, but I sort of walked in on you and Padma snogging earlier."

Ron's ears turned a deep red. "Oh."

Harry grinned. "I mean, I think its great, mate! You two did have a pretty good time at the ball. Has this been going on since then?"

Ron shook his head. "Not really. I mean, I don't know. It's only been

going on for a couple of weeks. I met her in Hogsmeade for a bit, but mostly it's just ... snogging."

Harry nodded. "Yeah I get that. Why didn't you say anything?"

Ron shrugged. "I don't know. I guess it just didn't seem that important with everything else that's been going on."

"I see. Well, I think it's great, but why are you hiding the relationship?"

"We're not. I mean, we've went to Hogsmeade together and I walk her to classes sometimes. I just didn't tell you and Hermione." Ron explained, his ears reddening again.

Harry grinned. "Whatever mate. I'm beat, so talk to you in the morning."

He climbed into his four poster and wondered why Ron hadn't mentioned it. Then he shrugged, it wasn't important and Ron was right. So much had been going on lately. And the last Hogsmeade visit, Harry had had the trouble with Cho. Then the third task, then everything with Mr. Crouch. Yeah, he could definitely see where Ron couldn't figure out when to mention it. He grinned, well if Ron and Hermione were both dating other people then maybe that was a good thing. Maybe they wouldn't bicker so often.

He rolled over onto his side and grinned; nah.

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*Her lips moved over his cheek and he reached for her, fisting his hands in her hair. She smelt like spring and strawberries and he wanted her to come closer. He managed to find her lips and he sank into them.*

*She let out a soft moan that made his blood run hot and his hands moved up her sides, brushing against the sides of her breasts. "I love you," she whispered against his ear.*

*The words made him feel warm inside and he knew that he felt the*

*same. "I love you, too ... but I don't ... who are you?"*

*Her smile made him sigh as she ran her hands over his chest and into his hair. "Listen to your heart, and it will tell you the truth."*

Harry sat up in bed, his heart pounding in his chest. The dream had been intense. Intense enough for him to now be extremely uncomfortable. He glanced over at where his roommates were sleeping before he slipped out of bed. He needed a cold shower.

A few minutes later he stood under the spray, letting it beat down on his skin. He wondered who the girl had been in his dream. She had felt amazing in his arms and he had wanted nothing more than to spend the rest of his life kissing her. He sighed as he reached over for the soap and began to wash up.

It looked like the mystery girl was going to stay a mystery for a little while longer.

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As the weeks dragged on, Mr. Crouch was still missing. Harry had asked Moody if he had found him but according to the ex-Auror, he seemed to have dropped off the face of the earth.

His return letter from the Marauders had been extremely helpful. They had listed about twenty spells and jinxes for him to practice that could be useful in the third task. He continued to practice them all every night of the week, except for the ones when he had animagus lessons with Professor McGonagall.

He still hadn't told any of his friends about him learning how to become an animagus. He wasn't sure why he was keeping it all a secret, but he continued to do so. He also was really pleased because he could now fully transform three vital parts of his body into a red and gold phoenix: both of his arms (including his hands) and his head. The eyes of the phoenix however, were a piercing emerald green which made him stand out. He had mastered changing his head into a phoenix only two days before and he was gleeful with the idea. McGonagall was impressed and she told him that she wouldn't

be in the least bit surprised if by the beginning of the next school year he could completely transform into a phoenix. He could only grin at that. She had also told him that they were not going to have any more lessons this year as exams started in two days and then the third task. She wanted him to concentrate on the task ahead but she promised that they could continue them next year if he needed them.

But there was one thing that worried Harry more than anything. He had fallen asleep in Divination, except it hadn't really been a dream. He was an owl and he was flying into the window of an ivy-covered house high on a hillside. There was a huge snake on the floor and Wormtail. Voldemort was there and he seemed to be having a conversation with Wormtail and he was talking about how if he didn't be careful, Wormtail would be fed to the snake, Nagini. Then Voldemort placed the Cruciatus Curse on Wormtail. Harry had woken up clutching the scar on his forehead from the intense pain of it. Once he had managed to escape Trelawney he went to go see Dumbledore.

There Harry had learnt some interesting things. First of all, after Dumbledore left for a moment, Harry's curiosity had gotten the better of him and he had gone into his pensive. In that pensive, Harry learnt that Karkaroff was indeed accused of being a Death Eater but he was released from Azkaban for giving out names: Anton Dolohov, Evan Rosier, Travers, Augustus Rookwood, Mulciber, and Snape. But Dumbledore swore to the court that Snape had turned spy for them. Before Harry could fully comprehend that one he found himself in another memory; this time Ludo Bagman was brought in and accused of being a Death Eater. He swore his innocence and the jury dismissed him. And the final memory was of Mr. Crouch's son brought in along with the Lestranges. They were accused of torturing the Longbottoms into insanity with the Cruciatus Curse. They were all sentenced to life in Azkaban. Then Dumbledore had pulled Harry from the pensive.

Once Harry had finished apologizing for his actions he told Dumbledore about the dream. He was worried that it might have actually happened, like the one that had felt so incredibly real when he had dreamed it that summer. James had been worried about him then. But Dumbledore wasn't sure if it was real or not.



“Harry,” Dumbledore said softly as he got up to leave. “You won’t tell anyone about Neville’s parents will you? I think that that is for him to tell.”

Harry nodded. “I won’t, sir. I promised him that I wouldn’t tell anyone long ago.”

Dumbledore gave Harry a puzzled look. “How long have you known?”

Harry shrugged. “A while, he told me when we were younger and I know my Da told me. Da was good friends with Neville’s parents at one time. Da goes to visit them sometimes.”

Dumbledore smiled. “I should have known. Alright, Harry, go finish practicing for the third task. And Harry?”

“Yes sir?”

“The best of luck.”

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Finally it was the day of the third task and Harry woke up ready to go. He just wanted this entire thing to be done and over with. He hurried down to breakfast, wishing that he was simply one of the students who were studying for their exams. As he helped himself to some more bacon in the Great Hall, McGonagall came forward.

“Harry, the champion’s families are waiting in the back room.”

Harry nodded. He grabbed another piece of bacon and was just about to follow McGonagall into the room where he had gone when his name had been drawn when Professor O’Bryan stepped in front of him.

“Er, hi Professor.”

Professor O’Bryan smiled warmly at him. “Hello Harry. I know that you’re just about to go back and see your family but I just wanted a

quick word with you about the essay you handed in.”

Harry frowned. The essay had been about the history of using runes in magic and he had thought that he had done a fairly good job at it. “Oh, did I mess it up?”

She shook her head. “Oh no! I didn’t mean to give you that impression! I just wanted to tell you that I was impressed with it. It was actually one of the best essays on the subject that I’ve ever read. Of course, I’ve only been teaching for two years but I thought it was brilliant. I was wondering if you had planned to take my class next year?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah I am. I really enjoy it, Professor. I didn’t think I would but we get to look into a lot of really interesting things. I like looking into the history part too because no sane person can enjoy the history lectures from Binns.”

O’Bryan laughed. “You can say that again! Anyway, the essay was amazing and I know that since you’re a champion and don’t have to write the exams, you don’t actually have any other work to do but I was wondering if you would do something for me?”

“I guess.”

“Well, at the beginning of next year, I was thinking I would start my new class off again with a small presentation. I was wondering if you would be interested in helping me start it off, using the arguments from your essay. I think that it would be a great way to show my new class how interesting the subject material is. What do you say?”

Harry grinned. He didn’t know what to say. He hadn’t expected that. He remembered though that this year, the third years had been treated to a presentation like that. He shrugged. “Sure, why not? What would I have to do?”

O’Bryan beamed at him. Her soft green eyes alight with happiness. She was pretty when she smiled and gave the impression that she was really sweet. “Thank you! It would of course, mean a little extra homework for you this summer. But mostly, it would just be turning

your essay into a presentation. Simple really. Of course, you can write to me in the summer with any questions you may have. This year I had Miss Edgecombe do it for the third years and she made her presentation like a muggle talk show. It was quite creative and it left the attention open to questions any time during the presentation. There are many ways in which you could go about it. Just let me know and I'll tell you what I'm looking for."

Harry grinned. "Thanks Professor, that sounds great."

"Good. Alright, well, I'm sorry to have kept you waiting. Go see your family and good luck in the third task!"

Harry watched her leave, grinning. He had always enjoyed Ancient Runes and he had loved her teaching but he had no idea that his essay had been that brilliant. A presentation? He grinned. Hermione was going to be so jealous.

He laughed to himself as he headed back into the room. To his surprise, it wasn't only James, Sirius, and Remus but Mrs. Weasley and Bill were there as well.

"Hey, I didn't know that you two were coming?"

Mrs. Weasley smiled at him, pulling him close for a warm hug as she covered his face in kisses. "Of course we would come! Arthur couldn't make it for the meet and greet but he plans to be here this evening to watch the task."

Harry nodded. "Great. Hey Da, Uncle Remus, Uncle Sirius, what's up?"

James laughed and pulled Harry close for a hug. "Absolutely nothing. I just wish that this task was over and done with."

Sirius grinned. "He's been pulling his hair out, going crazy with worry over you. I told him that you could handle yourself."

Harry grinned as he was pulled into more hugs by Sirius and Remus. Then he grinned up at Bill. "So why aren't you in Egypt?"

Bill grinned. "I'm taking a little vacation. I heard about you fighting that horntail. Charlie says that you were amazing! And it takes a lot to impress him when it comes to flying skills."

"Thanks." Harry grinned.

"So what took you so long getting down here?" Sirius asked.

Harry grinned. "Oh, well actually Professor O'Bryan stopped me. She was really impressed with my final essay and wants me to do this presentation at the beginning of next year for her third year class as a sort of introduction."

"Wow, that's impressive. The essay must have been good." James replied.

Mrs. Weasley nodded. "Harry, that's wonderful! Congratulations!"

Harry shrugged as Fleur stepped up next to him. "Hi Fleur."

She smiled but her eyes were all for Bill. "'Ello 'Arry, who iz your familee?"

Harry grinned at her. "Um, this is my Da and my uncles Sirius and Remus. This is Mrs. Weasley and her son Bill. Everyone this is the champion from Beauxbatons, Fleur Delacour."

"Eet iz neece to meet you," she replied as she grinned up at Bill before she headed back to her family.

Bill just grinned. "Well, she's beautiful."

Everyone laughed as they headed outside of the castle. Harry spent the day showing them around and listening to stories about how and when the castle changed from when Mrs. Weasley and the Marauders were at school. They talked about the task a bit and Harry told them about the dream that he had had.

James nodded. "Dumbledore told me about it. He's bit worried but at

the same time he says not to worry about it.”

Sirius’ eyes darkened. “I just can’t believe that Wormtail is still living. If I ever get my hands on him I’m going to –”

“Do absolutely nothing.” Remus replied. “The last thing that you need is to go to Azkaban for finally committing the crime that you were originally imprisoned for. None of us can do anything. We can only hope that Voldemort finishes him off for us.”

Harry sighed. “I wish that he hadn’t gotten away that night, then maybe none of this would be happening.”

James sighed and draped his arm around his son’s shoulders. “I doubt it. We always knew that he would try to return to power. If Wormtail wasn’t helping him someone else would have. For right now the only thing that we can be thankful of is that he still does not have a body, which makes him less powerful.”

Harry nodded. “Alright.”

Sirius grinned. “Okay, so why don’t you fill us in on the spells that you’ve learnt for the task.”

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The day went by quickly and finally it was time for the champions to go down to the Quidditch pitch. Bagman explained that Professors Flitwick, Moody, and McGonagall would be patrolling the perimeter of the maze so that if anyone had any trouble they could send up red sparks and someone would come to collect them. They only had to get to the Triwizard Cup. The first person to touch the cup would be the champion. When the whistle blew, Harry entered the maze.

It wasn’t really so bad as he got going. He ran into Hagrid’s giant Blast-Ended Skrewt; a Dementor who was really a boggart; an odd golden mist; he caught Viktor trying to curse Cedric (but Viktor’s eyes were unfocused and he was under the Imperius Curse) so he stunned him; a sphinx where he surprisingly solved the riddle; and then he saw the cup.

Just as made his way towards it he noticed Cedric running that way too, but Cedric was so focused on the cup that he didn't noticed the huge spider coming towards him. Harry yelled out to warn him but it was too late. Harry hurried towards him to help and after a lot of different spells the two of them managed to get away. Then they decided to take the cup together because after all, it still was a Hogwarts victory. On the count of three they both reached forward and placed their hand on the cup and to their surprise felt a tug at the navel as they flew away from the Quidditch pitch.

And when they landed they found themselves in a dark graveyard. A place that gave Harry a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. He knew that the feeling wasn't a joke when he heard the familiar voice of Peter Pettigrew say 'Avada Kedavra' and Cedric dropped dead next to him.

Then all he could do was gulp.

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## Chapter 23: The Return of the Dark Lord

**Author's Notes:** please review - bits and pieces from both the book and the movie!! newly edited

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## Chapter XXIII – The Return of the Dark Lord

Harry glanced at Cedric, his voice and his heart lost in his throat. This wasn't happening. There was no way that this was actually happening. Cedric wasn't dead and Wormtail wasn't here, he wasn't being instructed by that ... that thing in his arms to kill the spare as he had said before whispering those unforgivable words. He gulped as he looked down into those folded blankets in Wormtail's arms and when he did, pain soared through the scar on his forehead and he gasped, falling to his knees. He knew what was inside of those blankets now.

He felt arms grip him, but the pain was so intense that he couldn't even drum up the energy to struggle. He was dragged across the rough ground and slammed back against something hard. When he managed to open his eyes he realized that it was a tombstone and it had the name, Tom Riddle on it and the date of both a birth and death. Then he realized that Wormtail was tying him up to the stone with a rough rope. It was tough and Harry knew that in his weakened state there was no way that he would be able to get himself out of this situation.

He watched Wormtail walk away, his scar was throbbing so badly but he somehow managed to speak anyway.

"You! Why are you doing this?"

But Wormtail didn't answer only making Harry even angrier by the fact that he was there. He didn't understand how he could be doing this. Didn't Peter think that he had hurt his family enough? Yet here he was helping Voldemort do ... something that Harry was much too afraid to figure out. The pain in his scar wasn't as intense as it had been but it was still stinging in pain. He watched fearfully as Wormtail brought out a huge cauldron, big enough for a full grown man to sit in. He lit a fire beneath it and he filled the cauldron with water. The water began to bubble and shine and then it looked almost as if it was shining like diamonds. Then he laid the tiny creature in the blankets next to the cauldron carefully.

"It is ready, Master."

Then a cold shrill voice spoke from what could only be the thing inside of those blankets. "Now."

Wormtail bent down and picked up the tiny creature. It was the most horrifying sight that Harry had ever seen. It was as tiny as a child but it was hairless and almost scaly-looking. It was a dark reddish black in colour with thin and feeble arms and legs. Its face was flat and looked more like a snake than a human being and its eyes were dark, shining red. Harry watched as the creature wrapped its tiny arms around Wormtail's neck as he carried it towards the cauldron. He

dropped it inside and Harry's only real thought was; *please let it drown.*

Wormtail was speaking now, his wand pointed towards the ground at Harry's feet. His voice was hoarse and almost whiny sounding as he spoke. "Bone of the father, unknowingly given, you will renew your son."

The ground trembled and broke open where Harry was sitting. A bone flung up from between Harry's legs in the crack and flew into the cauldron. The cauldron smoked and turned a deep blue as it hissed.

Then Wormtail's voice was quivering as he raised the right sleeve of his robes, holding a small dagger in his hands. "Flesh – of the servant – w-willingly given – you will – revive – your master."

He closed his eyes and raised the dagger. Harry watched in horror as he brought the dagger down, slicing off his own hand and a sick plopping sound assured Harry that it had indeed fallen into the now burning red-potion.

Then Wormtail was kneeling in front of him with a long blade. He grabbed his arm and pushed the sleeves of his robes up. "Blood of the enemy ... forcibly taken ... you will ... resurrect your foe."

He brought the blade down, piercing Harry's skin. Harry bit his lip to keep from yelling as he sliced down, the blade was now covered in blood. He took out a small glass phial and used it to collect the blood from the blade and from Harry's arm before he walked back to the cauldron and carefully dripped the blood into the cauldron. The potion turned a blinding white.

Wormtail backed away from the cauldron and whimpered as he fell to the ground, cradling his now stump of an arm. But Harry wasn't watching him. His eyes had fallen onto Cedric's body a few feet away before going back to the potion. It was shining and sparking and the only thing that Harry could think of was *please let it drown.* But even as he thought it, he knew that it wasn't going to happen.



Then through the mist of the potion he watched as a man so thin that you could see his bones, rose from the cauldron. His skin was ghost white and where his nose should have been there were slits like that of a snake and his eyes were a bright burning red.

“Robe me,” he said simply.

Wormtail jumped to his feet and pulled out a black cloak, carefully draping it over the man’s shoulders before handing him back his wand. And when the man turned and looked at Harry, he knew that he hadn’t been imagining it all.

Lord Voldemort was back.

Voldemort carefully began to examine his newly made body. Then he turned to a whimpering Wormtail.

“Your arm, Wormtail.”

Wormtail’s face lit up. “Oh, Master, thank you, Master.”

Voldemort’s face turned into a sneer as he glanced down at the stump of an arm that his servant had held out for him. “Your other arm, Wormtail.”

Wormtail whimpered again as he held out his left arm. Voldemort pushed up his sleeves and Harry could see some sort of dark symbol there but he couldn’t make out what it was. Voldemort placed his wand on it and it glowed.

“Now they will come.” He began to pace back and fourth for a bit before he turned to Harry. “You are tied up on the bones of my late father, Harry Potter. He was a muggle and a fool. Very much like your own mother. She died trying to save you and I killed my father. But he has been useful in his death.” He gave a small laugh. “He lived in that house up on the hill up there. He left my mother before I was even born, forcing me to live in that dreadful orphanage. Tom Riddle ... I never wanted to be associated with my father’s name.” He laughed again. “Listen to me, reliving my family history. How unimportant they were. Now my real family returns.”

Harry could hear small popping and swishing noises as people wearing masks and dark cloaks arrived around them. He listened as Voldemort began to talk to them. Demand of them why they had not tried to find him, help him. He wanted to know how they could have truly believed that he had died. The Death Eaters begged for forgiveness, some of them were tortured with the Cruciatus and Harry only closed his eyes as his scar continued to pound painfully on his head.

Then he only gasped harder when Voldemort suddenly knelt down in front of him, his finger on his scar as it burned painfully. "But I can touch him now." His long thin white finger slid down Harry's cheek. Then he turned to his followers. "Now untie him, Wormtail, and give him back his wand."

Harry shakily stood to his feet as he accepted his wand from Wormtail. He was going to die. He knew it. His leg was aching from a bad fall he had gotten in the maze. A maze that now seemed so stupid and so far away. His scar twinged on his forehead as Voldemort began to play with him.

"Bow to death, Harry."

Harry refused to bow. He was not going to be some toy for Voldemort to play with.

"I said BOW!" Voldemort yelled as Harry felt his back bend downwards against his will.

Voldemort smiled. "Very good. Now you face me, proudly like your father did. Let's duel. Crucio!"

Harry fell to the floor in pain as his body began to bend and stretch in ways that it wasn't supposed to. It felt like white-hot knives were stabbing him all over his body. He thought that he might have screamed but he wasn't sure. When the curse was lifted he stumbled to his feet. The Death Eaters around him were laughing as he looked up at Voldemort.

“A little break now, Harry. That hurt didn’t it ... you want me to do it again, don’t you?”

Before he could comment the curse hit him a second time. This time he knew he did scream as the pain seemed to be even worse than the first time. The curse lifted and he rolled away, trembling as he stood to his feet. He was going to die, just like Cedric. He was never going to see Ron, Hermione, Ginny, his Da, Sirius, and Remus ever again.

“Do you want me to do that again, Harry?”

Harry didn’t respond. He was tired of being played with. Then for what felt like the hundredth time in his life he suddenly found himself under the Imperius Curse again. Moody had used it on them in class, teaching them how to throw it off. The voice in his head was telling him to say no but he didn’t want to answer. He fought with himself for a few seconds and then he screamed.

“I WON’T!”

Voldemort gave him a slightly amused smile. “You won’t say no? Tut, tut, Dumbledore should have taught you better manners. Alright, more pain then.”

He raised his wand but Harry was quicker as he dived behind a tombstone, missing the curse.

Voldemort glanced at Harry in amusement. “We are not playing hide and seek, Harry ... You cannot hide from me. Does this mean that you are tired of our duel? Does this mean that you would prefer me to finish it now, Harry? Come out, Harry ... come out and play, then ... it will be quick ... it might even be painless ... I would not know ... I have never died ...”

Harry took a deep breath, he wasn’t going to die hiding; he was going to die bravely, fighting proudly. He didn’t want to die hiding. This man was the reason that his mother was dead. She had suffered more than anything at the hands of this man, all because he had tried to kill him as a baby. He was not going to let his mum’s death be for

nothing. He jumped out from behind the stone and at the same time that Voldemort said, 'Avada Kedavra' he said 'Expelliarmus'.

A jet of green light shot from Voldemort's wand and jet of red light from Harry's wand. To everyone's surprise, the lights hit in the middle, creating a wall of light between the two of them. Harry's wand was vibrating in his hand as he noticed the golden beads floating in the light. He heard Voldemort yell out to the Death Eaters to do nothing, to leave them alone. He wasn't sure why he did it, but he began to concentrate on the beads and force them back into Voldemort's wand. It seemed to be working because as the beads got closer, Voldemort's wand began to shake uncontrollably and he had to use both hands to hold onto it.

The bead slid into the end of Voldemort's wand and Harry gasped in shock as a shadow of Cedric came out of the wand.

"Hello, Harry, you can do it. Don't let go."

Harry only nodded to the shadow as an old man came out next. The old man looked at Harry for a moment. "So he was a wizard, how bout that? You can beat him boy! Just hold on."

Harry nodded and he watched in fascination as a shadow of Bertha Jorkins emerged before both his mother and his father came out of the wand. They came to stand next to him.

"Mum? Da?" He asked as the two shadows smiled at him and nodded.

"Listen, Harry, when the connection is broken we can only stay for a moment. But it will be long enough for you to get out. Grab the cup and go back and tell Dumbledore." The shadow version of James said.

The shadow of Lily nodded. "We love you, Harry. There is still much for you to learn and to discover. As soon as the connection is broken, run."

He nodded as Cedric came over. "Harry, bring my body back to my parents will you?"

Harry only nodded as the shadows all began to go towards Voldemort. Once they were surrounding him, Harry wrenched his wand from the connection and bolted towards Cedric's body. He wrapped his hand around Cedric's arm and cursed at how far away the cup was.

"Stun him!" Voldemort yelled as Harry held onto Cedric's hand. "Stand aside! I will kill him! He is mine!" Voldemort yelled angrily at his Death Eaters as Harry muttered a summoning charm and the cup flew into his hand and he vanished from the graveyard.

Harry landed next to Cedric's body in the middle of the clearing. He let go of the cup but he only held onto Cedric's body more tightly. His breathing was ragged. His arm and his leg were bleeding. His scar was still incredibly painful and his entire body ached from the Cruciatus. He could hear the cheering from the crowd and then he heard a gasp as Dumbledore fell to the ground next to Harry.

"Harry? Harry?!"

Harry only groaned. "He's back. Wormtail made a potion and he's back."

Dumbledore stared at Harry for a minute. "What?"

Harry nodded. "He ... he killed Cedric. Voldemort's back."

Rumours began to circulate through the crowd about Cedric being dead. Then suddenly Moody was there next to him. "Come on, Potter, let's go up to my office, we'll get you cleaned up."

"Stay here, Harry; I'll be with you in a moment. James should be on his way down from the stands." Dumbledore replied.

Harry could only nod as he felt himself being tugged away by Moody. "Dumbledore said stay." He murmured.

Moody ignored him and Harry was too weak to argue. He soon found himself inside of Moody's office. He drank the potion he was handed and the room came into better focus.

“Come on, Potter, what happened?”

Harry gulped. “Voldemort’s back. He killed Cedric. He made a potion. Lots of Death Eaters. We duelled. My mum and da came out of his wand.”

Moody nodded. “How did he treat the Death Eaters?”

“What?”

“I mean, was he happy to see them? Did he forgive them?”

“He ... I think so.”

Moody nodded. “He forgave them all? What happened in the graveyard, Potter?”

Harry’s focus had returned a bit better now. “I – I don’t believe that I said anything about a graveyard, Professor.”

Moody only grinned. “I know that.”

Harry eyed Moody carefully. “How?”

Moody laughed. “Because it was I who put your name into the Goblet of Fire, Harry. It was I who made sure that the cup was a portkey to take you to the Dark Lord. He’s back you say? Then my work is done.”

Harry shook his head. “No, that’s not possible. You didn’t.”

Moody only grinned. “Who told you how to get past the dragons? I did. Who convinced Hagrid to show you the dragons? I did. Who told Cedric how to open the egg under water knowing that he would tell you because he’s a decent person? I did! It was me! If there’s one thing that I hate it’s a Death Eater that walked free. I was trapped but I managed to escape and I alone remained faithful. I alone was willing to help. Do you know how much he will reward me if I kill you for him?”

He raised his wand and Harry jumped to his feet, pulling his wand from his robes. Then the door burst open and someone yelled "Stupefy!" Moody fell to the ground and Harry only stood there trembling.

James burst into the room and picked Harry up as if he weighed less than a child, carrying him over to a chair. He held him in his arms, his face buried in his son's neck as tears fell from his eyes. "Harry, God ... Harry!" He hugged his son close, rocking back and forth and Sirius and Remus came to stand on either side of them, placing reassuring hands on James' shoulders.

"Moody," Harry said as he kept his arms around his father. "He's a Death Eater. He said ... he said that he put my name into the Goblet."

Dumbledore shook his head. "No this is not the real Alastor Moody. The real Moody would not have taken you from the scene tonight." He stood up and grabbed a pair of keys from the desk as he began to unlock the trunk. It was a compartment trunk like Harry had, but this one had seven compartments. In the last lock he found the real Alastor Moody lying on a dirt floor. His wooden leg was missing along with his magical eye and he looked like he had gotten much of his hair pulled out. "Alastor, are you alright?"

The real Mad-Eye Moody nodded. "I'm alright. Get me the hell out of here, Albus!"

Remus jumped down into the trunk and with Sirius' help they lifted Alastor from the bottom. "There you go, Alastor."

Dumbledore nodded. "Minerva, can you take Alastor to the hospital wing?"

McGonagall nodded and she carefully helped him out of the room as Dumbledore picked up the flask that Moody always carried around and brought it to his nose. "Polyjuice potion. Brilliant as Alastor never did drink from anything but his own flask."

Harry was sitting in a chair next to James now, but his father's arms

were still wrapped tightly around him. "Is he going to be okay?"

Dumbledore nodded. "He should be. But I think that in all of the excitement tonight, our friend here might have forgotten to take his potion."

As if on cue, Moody's face began to change. The eye and the leg popped out and he changed into a blonde freckled young man. Snape and McGonagall came to the door at the same time and McGonagall gasped. "Barty Crouch Junior!"

Dumbledore nodded. "I'm afraid so. Minerva, go to the kitchens and fetch a house elf named Winky. Severus, find me the strongest truth potion that you possess."

They all waited in silence until McGonagall came back with Winky. Winky gasped when she came into the room.

"Master Barty, what is you doing here?"

Dumbledore smiled. "Take a seat over there Winky. Enervate!"

Barty Crouch Junior came to at the spell and they shoved the truth potion that Snape returned with down his throat. Then Dumbledore began to ask questions. He had gone to Azkaban. It was his mother who was dying and she had asked his father to switch their places. So they had snuck his mother into Azkaban, gave her Polyjuice potion and Crouch Senior had brought his son home. He had been forced to live his life under an invisibility cloak and under the Imperius Curse. Bertha Jorkins had found out and his father had put such a huge memory charm on her that she was never quite the same again. Then Voldemort had learnt that he was alive. He had come to see him. He had asked him to do his bidding. He had agreed. His father had come home and he had reversed their roles.

He had broken into Moody's home and taken over his body then he had pretended it was a break-in and he had been the one to talk to Mr. Weasley when he had arrived. He had put Harry's name in the Goblet and he had changed the cup over into a portkey. It was him that had made the Dark Mark at the Quidditch cup. He killed his



father, transfigured his body into a bone and buried him outside of Hagrid's hut. And now he would be awarded because Voldemort had returned.

Once he was finished his story, Dumbledore stood up. "Minerva, watch him. Severus, bring Madam Bones up here and explain what happened. Harry, James, Sirius, Remus, come up to my office."

Harry followed Dumbledore up to his office. James still had his arm draped around his shoulders and Harry could feel him trembling but he wasn't sure if it was because of rage or fear. He figured it might be a little bit of both. They took a seat in front of his desk and Dumbledore turned to Harry.

"Harry, I need for you to tell me exactly what happened."

Harry looked down at his hands. He didn't want to go through it again. He didn't want to remember it at all. Sirius squeezed his hand gently as Remus squeezed one of his shoulders in support. He looked up at James who was simply looking at him in concern.

"Harry?" When he didn't respond, Dumbledore continued. "Harry, if I thought that it would help I would let you go tonight. But it won't. I need to know what happened."

Harry nodded and he started from the beginning. He explained about how he had heard Fleur scream in the maze and then had had seen Viktor attacking Cedric, obviously under the Imperius Curse; about how he and Cedric had decided to take the cup together; how the cup had been a portkey to the graveyard; how Wormtail had killed Cedric; how he had been tied up; about the potion; about Voldemort coming out; about how he had greeted his Death Eaters and who the Death Eaters were (Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, Macnair, Avery and others); about how they duelled; about how he had been under the Cruciatus twice and the Imperius once (James, Remus, and Sirius had all gasped in shock at this); about how he had hid and then decided that he didn't want to die hiding; about how their wands had connected.

"Connected?" Sirius asked, interrupting Harry for the first time.

“Priori Incantatem.” Dumbledore replied. “It’s because your wands have the same core. A phoenix feather, from Fawkes actually.”

“My wand is from Fawkes?” Harry asked.

Dumbledore nodded. “That means that you would have seen Cedric come out of the wand am I right?”

“And Mum and Da.” Harry turned to look up at James. “Why did you and mum come out? You didn’t die from Voldemort?”

James sighed. “We did, technically. That spell I ... made, well it, we died or we missed the spell. It was almost as if it brought us back to life. Or Voldemort believed that he killed us with the spell so maybe that affected his wand?”

Dumbledore nodded. “It did yes, so yes Voldemort believed he had killed both of you in a way which would explain why you came out. What happened then Harry?”

Harry explained about how the shadows had told him what to do and how he had escaped. Dumbledore only nodded.

“Harry, you’ve been through a terrible ordeal tonight. You were brave and you got through something that no adult wizard should have to face. Why don’t you let James take you down to see Madam Pomfrey now?”

Harry nodded as he headed to the hospital wing with James, Remus, and Sirius. James helped him into his pyjamas after the matron healed his arm and leg. He carefully tucked him into bed and then he took a seat in the chair beside him. Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Bill, Remus, Sirius, and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley sat there as well. Mrs. Weasley carefully brushed her fingers through his hair and leaned down to kiss his forehead. He smiled up at her in a thank you. Then she pulled him into her arms for a hug. He hugged her back tightly, loving the way that she held him and the way she smelled. Like perfume, beeswax, and home. He held on and as she tightened her grip gently, he broke down.

He cried for Cedric, for what had happened to him tonight, and for his mum. She had seemed so whole tonight and so young and wonderful. James reached forward and brushed his fingers through his son's hair as he cried on Mrs. Weasley's shoulder. James was at a loss of what to do. When he pulled back, wiping the tears from his eyes, Mrs. Weasley was smiling at him.

"Thanks, Mrs. Weasley."

She smiled up at him as she pressed a kiss to his cheek. "When someone cries on my shoulder, they call me Molly."

Harry grinned as James tucked him in again. "Thanks Molly."

They all jolted at the slam coming from Hermione. She blushed as she held a jar in her hand. "Sorry."

Remus handed James the sleeping potion as he gently urged Harry to drink it. He gulped it down and immediately drifted off into a dreamless sleep.

He was woken up a few hours later by yelling. He sat up quickly, without his glasses on as he listened. McGonagall was yelling. Apparently Fudge (the new head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement) had swept a Dementor in and the creature had kissed Barty Crouch Junior. Dumbledore was livid. The man had been their proof that Voldemort was back and that problems had been happening. Fudge refused to believe that Voldemort was back. He marched into the hospital wing and dropped a bag of galleons onto Harry's bed.

"Your winnings, Mr. Potter." He said coldly.

"Voldemort is back, Mr. Fudge, I saw him."

Fudge only stared at Harry for a moment before he turned towards the door. "That is preposterous and Madam Bones doesn't believe it for a moment either!"

He was stopped by Snape, who lifted up the sleeve on his left arm to show him a blackened skull with snakes running through it. "He is back, Fudge. This mark has been getting stronger all year. It turns black when he summons you. He is back."

Fudge didn't look convinced though as he stormed out of the wing. Dumbledore turned to the room then. "I need all of you to be on alert. Severus, Remus, James, Sirius, I need all four of you to sever your old differences and come together now. We are all on the same side." The four of them shook hands before Dumbledore continued. "Bill, can you contact Arabella Figg, Mundungus Fletcher and Remus can you go with him. We need to get the old crowd together."

Dumbledore nodded at them before he left the room.

Molly held out the sleeping potion. "Here honey, you didn't drink it all."

"Uncle Remus, don't go."

Remus smiled down at Harry. "I'll be back soon, maybe even by the time you wake up. Molly, James and Sirius will stay with you alright?"

He nodded as he said goodbye to him and Bill and he watched them leave the room. Molly held out the potion again. "Harry?"

Harry took the potion from her and gulped it down before falling back into deep sleep.

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When Harry got out of the hospital wing, he didn't want to talk to anyone. He was tired and he was scared. The leaving feast was exactly what he dreaded. Dumbledore told everyone what had happened and how Voldemort was back. They toasted Cedric Diggory and remembered him. Then it was time to go.

Harry was silent most of the train ride and no one really said anything different to him. They let him have the quiet. But he did learn one thing, Hermione had figured out Rita Skeeter's secret. She was an unregistered animagus in the form of a beetle. Hermione had caught

her in a jar in the hospital wing and was keeping her captive in an unbreakable jar until she promised to stop writing terrible stories about people. As he was getting his trunk to leave he grabbed George's arm. "George wait, where's Fred?"

"Did I hear someone call?" Fred asked from behind them.

Harry grinned. "Yeah, listen," he pulled out his one thousand galleons of Triwizard earnings. "I want you two to have this."

Fred stared at Harry in shock. "What are you mental? We're not taking it."

Harry nodded. "Yes you are. I don't want it. I don't need it. Use it to open your joke shop."

George goggled at him. "He's not joking, Fred."

"No, I'm not. I think that we're going to be needing a lot of laughs in the future and you two are just the ones to provide it. Take it or I'm throwing it away."

Fred accepted the bag from Harry. "Harry, how can we thank you for \_"

"You don't," Harry interrupted. "Just take it, but don't tell your mum where you got it from."

Fred laughed. "We won't."

Harry headed off the train then and made his way over to his Da and Sirius. He had done something good with the money and now he just wanted to go home.

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## **Chapter 24: Animagi and the Order of the Phoenix**

**Author's Notes:** please review! newly edited

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## **Chapter XXIV – Animagi and the Order of the Phoenix**

The first few days after Harry returned home he was both anxious and antsy. There had been no news in any way of Voldemort or of what he was doing. It worried Harry because he remembered James telling him that when Voldemort was around there had been mysterious deaths, weird things going on, unexplained occurrences even for the muggles, and lots of trouble. Yet here was Voldemort, newly born into his body and he was laying low. He wasn't causing any trouble and he was worst of all, making people believe that he hadn't really returned. Harry did not like the sound of that.

He knew that he wasn't the only one either as James, Remus, and Sirius all seemed to be on edge as well. They were doing something and corresponding with Dumbledore but when Harry asked the only answer he got was that they couldn't explain it now but they would in a little while. This was not the answer that Harry was looking for. He felt like he was being shut out, trapped in a house with three people that knew exactly what was going on but refused to share it. He deserved to know, after all, it had been him that had witnessed Voldemort's rebirth. He also knew deep down that they weren't doing this to annoy him, but because they couldn't really explain at the moment. He wasn't sure if this made him angrier or not.

But worst of all were the nightmares. Every time he closed his eyes at night he found himself back in the graveyard. He would watch Cedric die and then the potion. He couldn't count the number of times that James had rushed into his room to wake him from fitful dreams and to try to help him calm down; to hold him in his arms shaking because he had been just as terrified of Harry's screams as Harry had been of the memory that caused them. He felt guilty by it as he knew that his Da was barely sleeping because of the worry. This was why he had to ask Sirius for something.

Harry waited until James had gone to work and Remus was upstairs doing research. Sirius had yet to find a job as he was unsure of what he wanted to do though he did tell them that he was thinking of

becoming an Auror again. Harry was secretly hoping that Sirius didn't go back to work any time soon as he liked having him around all the time.

"Uncle Sirius, can I talk to you for a minute?" Harry asked as he stepped into Sirius' room.

Sirius turned to grin at him. "Of course, Harry. You know, I get such a kick out of hearing you say Uncle Sirius, almost as much of a kick as when you were little and called me Siri."

Harry laughed. "I called you Siri?"

Sirius nodded. "Well, Sirius was hard to say. I was Siri, Wormtail was ... actually I don't think you called him anything. You hadn't quite mastered Peter yet. Remus was Reemssh. It was cute."

Harry laughed. "Well, I can definitely say your names properly now. Listen, can I ask you for a favour?"

Sirius nodded as he took a seat in one of the armchairs near the fire. "Sure, what's up?"

"Okay, but you have to promise not tell to Da and Uncle Remus?"

Sirius looked at Harry suspiciously now. "Not tell them? Harry, what's going on?"

"It's nothing bad, I promise. It's just; I don't want them to worry."

Sirius' left eyebrow rose slightly. "And you think that I won't worry?"

"No I mean, it's just that you're going to know what's going on, you know."

Sirius nodded. "I got it. I promise, Harry, now what's going on?"

Harry sighed. "I'm still having nightmares. It's almost been a week now but I'm still reliving the graveyard every time that I close my eyes. My scar is always hurting now and I know its worrying Da more than

anything. I wake him up almost every night because of my dreams and he comes into my room all worried and sad. He's not sleeping properly because of it. And it's making me worry about him."

Sirius sighed. "Harry, worrying is part of a parent's job. He's always going to worry about you, even if you didn't have some evil wizard's hatred."

Harry laughed. "*Evil wizard's hatred?*"

Sirius shrugged. "Well, you know what I mean." He grinned. "Alright, so what does James worrying too much have to do with me?"

"Well, I was wondering if maybe you could put some kind of silencing charm around my room so that he won't hear me if I dream. I mean, I'll still tell him if I happen to have an odd dream or something but he doesn't need to be there with me whenever I have a repeat of an old nightmare. Will you do it?" Harry asked.

Sirius smiled at him. "Of course I will. That sounds like a pretty reasonable request to me."

"Great, will you do it now? Before he comes home?"

Sirius laughed. "Sure."

They walked over to Harry's bedroom and he stood in the center of the room, he waved his wand around and said: Silencio!

"Okay, that should have worked. Now you stay in here and scream and I'll tell you if I hear it, okay?" Sirius suggested.

Harry nodded and as soon as his godfather closed the door he yelled. Then he stepped out of his room to where Sirius was standing in the hallway. "Well?"

Sirius grinned. "Nothing."

"Thanks, Uncle Sirius!"



Sirius grinned. "No problem. Come on, why don't we go work on your animagus transformation. You never did mention if you had progressed any farther then both arms?"

Harry grinned. "I forgot to tell you! I managed to change my head too!"

Sirius' grin widened. "Mate, I have got to see this."

They headed back into Sirius' room and Harry concentrated on his phoenix form and on transforming. He changed both of his arms into the red and gold phoenix wings and then he changed his head into a phoenix with piercing emerald green eyes.

Sirius whistled. "Blimey, it is something to see those eyes out of a red and gold bird. Great job! Let's try the next thing then. If you managed to transform your torso into the bird then you've got the cat in the bag! It shouldn't be a problem at all now that you've got the head."

Harry began to work hard on concentrating his changing. He pictured the torso of the phoenix with a beautiful gold belly and reddish gold feathered wings. Within minutes he was a phoenix with human legs.

"Holy shit!" Sirius said with a grin. "Harry that's amazing! Change it back and try again."

Harry did this and returned to the same form. Sirius urged him to try to change his legs next. The legs came on the first try and he found himself standing in the middle of Sirius' bedroom as a phoenix. Sirius applauded and urged him to change back.

"One year! It took you one year! I can't believe it! That's an entire year faster then it took James and I. Alright, now here comes the hard part. You need to learn how to transform your entire body in one go, quick and back. Go."

Harry nodded. He began to concentrate on what his body had felt like in the phoenix form as well as what it had looked like. It took him exactly one minute to go from a human to a phoenix and back again. Sirius told him that the more he practiced the faster it would be. They

worked for three more hours and by the end of the time, it took Harry less than five seconds to transform into a phoenix and less than five seconds to go back.

Sirius grinned. "This is great! Now we need to work on your skills. Are you up for it or do you want to rest?"

Harry shook his head. "No way do I want to rest."

Sirius grinned. "That's my boy! Alright, let's start with flying. Don't do too much at once now as I'm not sure how flying will affect you."

Harry nodded and he changed into a phoenix. Then he lifted his wings, flapped them once, twice and took flight. It was incredible. It was even better than being on a broomstick. He felt like he had the world at his feet. He flew in circles around Sirius and in his happiness let out a stream of phoenix song. The song filled him up with hope and joy as Sirius grinned up at him.

Remus came to the door of the bedroom. "Padfoot, I thought I heard phoenix song? Did Fawkes – is that Harry?"

Sirius grinned. "Come on down, Harry!"

Harry landed on Sirius' bed and then changed back into himself. "I did it!"

Remus goggled at him. "You most certainly did! Harry, that was amazing!"

Sirius nodded. "Incredible! And you looked like you were having the time of your life flying up there."

Harry grinned. "I was. And the phoenix song! It's wonderful! It makes me feel good and happy and hopeful!"

Remus smiled. "That's the purpose. I wonder if you can do the other skills."

"What do you mean?"

“Well, phoenixes are supposed to be able to carry impossibly heavy loads and have healing tears. Do you want to test it out?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah.”

Remus grinned. “Alright, well let’s see if you can lift me off the ground.”

Harry nodded. He changed back into his phoenix and flew above Remus, holding out his tail feathers. Remus grabbed hold of them and to his surprise Harry flew around the room with Remus holding on, feeling as light as a feather. Sirius laughed and grabbed a hold of Remus’ foot. Harry only sang cheerfully as he flew around the room with both of them dangling below. James came to the door then.

“What is going on around here?” He glanced up at the phoenix that dropped Remus and Sirius back onto the ground and landed on his shoulder. “Harry?”

Harry flew over to the bed and changed back. “I got it!”

James let out a whoop as he pulled Harry into his arms. “I’ll say you’ve got it! When did this happen?”

“Today! Sirius asked me if I had progressed any farther and I told him that I had managed to change my head during my last lesson with McGonagall. Then I managed this! We were just testing my skills. The only one we haven’t tried yet was my phoenix tears to see if they can heal anything.” Harry explained.

Sirius nodded. “He can do the song beautifully and he just flew Remus and I around the room for ten minutes so I’d say that he’s got the hang of it.”

James laughed. “This is wonderful! Alright, healing tears eh?” He pulled out a pocket knife and made a little slice in his arm. “I can heal this with a charm but let’s see what you can do, Harry.”

Harry changed back and when he saw the cut from the phoenix’s

viewpoint he felt a wave of grief wash over him, sadness that the cut was there. Crystal clear tears fell from his eyes and onto the cut. Misty grey smoke rose up from James' arm and then the cut was gone. Harry changed back and grinned.

"I'm a phoenix!"

James grinned and hugged his son close. "You most certainly are!"

"What were the other animals you said you saw? A lion, an owl, and a wolf?" Sirius asked.

Harry nodded. "Yeah. I asked McGonagall about it too and she said that it is possible but it's rare and that if I saw four animals then I can become all four animals."

James nodded. "That's amazing to me. Alright, so what animal do you want to attempt next?"

"I think that he should do the owl," Remus suggested. "I think that because he already has the phoenix form down-pat and since the owl is also a flying creature that he would get that form very quickly. Faster than say the four-legged animals."

Sirius nodded. "That makes sense. I'd listen to Remus. Go for the owl."

"Can I try it right now?"

James shrugged. "Why not?"

Harry closed his eyes and brought back to mind the owl that he had seen. A black owl with his own emerald green eyes. Then he began to imagine that his arm was an owl wing. He felt a tingling on his arm and when he opened his eyes, he had a black wing. "Wow."

James nodded. "Keep going, Harry."

Harry did keep going and within half an hour he had managed to change every part of his body. He changed back into himself and

went for the full transformation. He continued to practice changing back and forth like he had with the phoenix and within an hour he could do the owl just as fast.

Sirius only grinned. "Blimey that is brilliant, Harry!"

Harry grinned. "I can do it!"

Remus smiled. "You certainly can. Try for the wolf now. I think that it will be more difficult because it is a completely different creature."

James nodded. "Yeah I think that you might have more trouble getting this one as quickly."

They were right. Harry was doing his hardest to change his left arm into a wolf's paw but he was getting nothing. After half an hour he gave up. "I'm tired."

James nodded. "That's alright. You did brilliantly, Harry, I think it's time that you take a break. Besides, there are some things we need to discuss."

Harry nodded. He followed James, Sirius, and Remus down into the kitchen for dinner and as they helped themselves to plates of Lasagna, salad, and garlic bread that Maddy and Mickey had made, Sirius started.

"Alright, Harry, do you remember how I was telling you about this house that I inherited because I'm the only Black left?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, the one that you hated because your parents were all into the dark arts and disappointed because you weren't a Slytherin; you said that no one's lived in it in at least ten years. You went there last year with Da to retrieve your belongings. Why?"

"Well, we're going to see it tomorrow. We need a secret location for the Order of the Phoenix."

"Order of the Phoenix?" Harry asked.

James nodded. "Yeah, do you remember me mentioning it? It was an association that Dumbledore started in the first war against Voldemort. That's what we've been working on the last few days and what Dumbledore meant in the hospital wing by getting the old crowd together. We're going to start it up again since Madam Bones still refuses to believe that Voldemort is even back. She has Fudge on her side and he is in charge of the Law Enforcement Department, which is just as bad. There's nothing that the ministry can do to help us at the moment, well, they're refusing to help anyway."

Remus nodded. "And Sirius has offered Grimmauld Place to Dumbledore as the location. So we're going to go check it out tomorrow and see and then we'll find out if it can be used or not."

"The old house elf Kreacher should have been taking care of it since my mum died but you can't hope. The elf is a whack!"

"So this Order is going to fight against Voldemort?" Harry asked.

"That's the plan. It's what happened before." James replied.

"Alright," Harry replied. "Then I guess I can't wait to see the house."

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry regretted those words deeply when he stepped inside of Number Twelve Grimmauld Place the next day. It was dark, dingy, and extremely depressing. There was a picture of Mrs. Black in the entrance hall and as soon as they walked in she started screaming about what a terrible mistake and disappointment Sirius had been and about letting half-bloods and werewolves into her home. Sirius ignored her and shoved some curtains in front of her face.

They found Kreacher in the kitchen and Harry could see why Sirius had called him a whack. He wore a filthy pillowcase that reminded Harry strongly of Dobby and he muttered under his breath. He would insult them constantly but then look confused when they responded. Sirius thought it was probably because he had lived alone for so long. He obviously hadn't taken care of the house either. It was filled with dark arts stuff and was so dusty and full of cobwebs that Harry wasn't

even sure what colour the walls were.

"It's er, nice," Harry said when they made it to the third floor and Harry still wasn't seeing anything different.

Sirius snorted. "Please! Don't lie to me it's a dump! But I suppose if we get some decent house elves we can clean it up."

"What about Kreacher?"

Sirius shrugged. "He's too far-gone. He's been alone too long and I don't think he even knows how to clean anymore. I'm setting him free."

Harry nodded and then he thought of something. "Hey Sirius, there's this house elf at Hogwarts who well ... he'll do anything for me because I helped set him free in second year. I'm sure if I asked him he would be more than willing to help out."

Sirius grinned. "That'd be great. Send him an owl right away."

Harry nodded as he followed Sirius into what must have been at one time the master bedroom just as Kreacher came into the room.

"Kreacher, come here." Sirius replied.

"Stupid poor master, he's a criminal and the mistress always said that he was no good," Kreacher muttered.

Sirius rolled his eyes and pulled out a pair of musty clothes from the dresser. "Kreacher, I'm giving you clothes."

Kreacher shrugged. "I is not wanting to work for you anyway." He took the clothes and disappeared on the spot.

"What happened?"

"I set him free. Now I can place the appropriate charms on the house to make sure that he can't get back in." Harry watched as he muttered a few incoherent things and then he grinned. "All set, so

how quickly can you get a hold of this elf?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry received a letter back from Dobby that evening. Dobby was thrilled at the opportunity to work for Harry's godfather and he said that Winky was willing to help. Harry asked them to meet him at the address the next day. Dobby and Winky goggled when they walked inside the house and Harry winced.

"I warned you that it was bad."

Sirius nodded. "I think that it might be a hopeless cause."

Winky rolled up her sleeves and grinned. "Of course not, sir! Dobby and I will have it spick and span and better then new very soon, sir."

The elves were good to their word. By the next day the house was spotless. It was still drab and depressing but it was clean. Minus the creatures and other things that were still hiding around the house; but they would get cleaned up soon. Sirius was shocked when he walked back in.

"You two are miracle workers."

Dobby and Winky blushed. "Thank you, sir."

Sirius grinned at them. "Do you two need work? Because I could use house elves like you to help me keep the place up?"

Dobby grinned. "I is honoured to work for Harry Potter's godfather, sir."

Winky nodded. "I is just glad to work where Dobby is working."

Sirius grinned. "Now Harry tells me that you get a wage, Dobby, how much would you like to work for me?"

"One galleon a month, sir," Dobby beamed.



“That’s it?”

Dobby nodded. “I is not wanting a sickle more, sir, it would be too much.”

Winky smiled. “And I is not wanting anything!”

Sirius shrugged. “Alright, then you’re both hired! Welcome to Grimmauld Place.”

They beamed and Harry only grinned, maybe they could help brighten the place up a bit.

\*\*\*\*\*

The next day, James stepped into the kitchen at Potter Manor where Harry was eating his breakfast. “Well, Dumbledore agreed last night. Grimmauld Place is the perfect location. The proper wards and precautions have been set up for the Order.”

Harry grinned. “That’s great! I’m glad that you found a place to hang out. Though I’m hoping Sirius gives Dobby and Winky some tips to redecorate the place. It’s pretty depressing.”

James snorted. “Not to mention the dark objects and creatures hanging around. Winky found doxies in the curtains and not to mention three Boggarts! They’ve got their work cut out for them. But I’m glad Kreacher was set free. That elf has always been terrible and he’s very untrustworthy.”

Harry nodded. “Dobby and Winky will enjoy it better there I think.”

James nodded. “Another thing. Dumbledore wants the Weasleys and Hermione to move into Grimmauld Place for the summer. He thinks that it will be safer for them.”

“WHAT?” Harry protested. “Da, no way, you can’t let them live there! It’s so depressing and ... no!”

James smiled. “I was thinking along the same lines. So I mentioned it

to Dumbledore and he agreed though he wants to add his own wards to the manor first.”

Harry tilted his head to the left as he realized what his father had just said. “They get to move in here for the rest of the summer?”

James grinned. “Well, it’s not like we don’t have the room. Besides, they’ll have the Quidditch pitch and the game room and the pool. This way they will also be away from Order headquarters. Well, what do you say?”

Harry jumped to his feet and hugged his father. “I think it’s brilliant. So when do they get here?”

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## Chapter 25: Guests

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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### Chapter XXV – Guests

*She was curled in his lap, her head resting against his heart. Her even breathing was calm and normal and sent little butterflies through his stomach. She belonged there.*

*“I can’t stay here forever, you know,” she murmured.*

*“I want you too.” Harry told her. “I don’t want you to leave.”*

*She reached up to kiss him softly. “I have to get back. He’s waiting for me.”*

*“But I’m waiting for you.”*

*Her hand rested on his cheek and she smiled. “Funny, but I didn’t know that. It’s something you should think about.”*

*Harry kissed her deeply, his hands in her hair. "No, I need you."*

*Her lips met his once more before she stood up. "Show me it's true. Listen to your heart." She began to walk backwards and she faded back into the wall.*

Harry's eyes opened and he sighed. He had been having similar dreams like that one for the last month. He wasn't sure what they meant or who they were about. All he knew was that when he woke up and the girl from his dreams wasn't there he felt a kind of longing that he couldn't explain. This mystery girl was beginning to make him ache. He sighed and pushed the thoughts from his mind.

He didn't need to worry about crazy dreams at the moment. He had guests coming over. With that happy thought he closed his eyes and went back to sleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry hurried down to breakfast the next day. He was dying to know if Dumbledore had given James an answer about when the Weasleys and Hermione were coming to the manor. The excitement of his friends coming made him forget about the terrible nightmares that he was having night after night. It seemed as if he was switching from nightmare to the dream about the mystery woman to nightmare. He was grateful to Sirius for putting that charm on his bedroom. He felt a lot better knowing that his Da had one less thing to worry about.

He stepped into the kitchen just in time to hear James utter a stream of curses that caused Harry to stop in the doorway and stare in shock. He had never heard such a stream of words come out of his father's mouth. "Da?"

James' head whipped around quickly and he sighed. "Do not repeat what I just said, ever!"

Harry laughed. "Alright, what's going on?"

James pointed at the paper; his eyes had darkened to the colour of

smoke. "These bastards are ... they are completely ... damn it! What right do they have to do this?"

"Do what?" Sirius asked as he stepped into the room. He straddled a chair around the table and helped himself to a muffin.

"This," James replied as he tossed the *Daily Prophet* at him.

Sirius was quiet for a few minutes as he read the page. "This is pure bullshit! What the hell is the ministry trying to prove by doing this?"

Remus came into the kitchen and sighed. "I was wondering when you two would manage to glance at the paper. Neither one of you have looked at in the last few days."

James glared at his friend. "You knew about this?"

Remus nodded. "Prongs, there's nothing that we can do about it. The ministry refuses to believe that Voldemort is back."

"What is in that paper?" Harry exploded angrily. "I am in this room too you know!"

James sighed. "Harry, I don't think that you should read it. It's just going to upset you."

"So it's about me then? Who cares? They've been writing lies about me all year?" Harry replied.

Sirius shook his head. "This is different. It's not strictly about you it's more so ..."

"Making you out to look like an idiot." Remus replied.

"What do you mean?"

James sighed and took the paper from Sirius. "There's a story here about this crazy guy who swears that he saw these creatures that don't exist. He wants to open up a zoo for them."

“But they don’t exist?” Harry asked.

James shook his head. “No, they don’t exist. So at the end of the article it says, direct quote here: *a tale worthy of Harry Potter.*”

Harry’s eyes hardened. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Sirius shrugged. “That he’s lying and so are you. The ministry wants the magical community to think that you’re a liar because they don’t want to admit that Voldemort is back.”

“That’s ridiculous! So what the ministry is just going to make me out to look like a liar so that no one will believe that he’s back? Then what the hell are they going to do when he makes it known that he is back?”

Remus shrugged. “I don’t know. I guess they’ll look like idiots.”

James ran his fingers through his hair in frustration. “People at work have been making comments to me about it, but I wasn’t sure what they meant. I swear to Merlin, if I hear one more damn thing about my son being an attention-seeking pathological liar, I’m going to punch them.”

Sirius leaned over and squeezed James’ shoulder. “Don’t worry about it, James. You’ll just have to ignore it. Just like Harry is going to have to learn how to do when he goes back to school.”

Harry groaned. “You don’t think they’ll stop by then?”

“I have no idea,” Remus said. “But unless something big happens that proves to them, showing them with their own eyes, that Voldemort is truly back. I think that it’s going to continue.”

Harry groaned and took a seat at the kitchen table, burying his head in his hands. “But wait! At the end of the term, Dumbledore told the entire school exactly what happened. So everyone should believe me right?”

James shook his head. “After listening to lies from the ministry for two

months? Good luck.”

Harry dragged his fingers through his hair in frustration and Sirius smirked. “What are you smirking about?”

Sirius shrugged. “I’m just amused by how many things you do similar to James is all, like father like son. So got any good news going?”

James nodded. “I talked to Dumbledore earlier this morning. He’s coming by in about an hour to add to the wards around the manor. He wants the three of us to add to them as well. Then he’s going to contact the Weasleys and Hermione to see about coming down here.”

“So they don’t know yet?” Harry asked.

James shook his head. “No and I don’t think Molly and Arthur are going to be too pleased to be leaving their home for the entire summer.”

Harry nodded. “Well, it will be so brilliant when they arrive though!”

Sirius grinned. “Yeah it will. Hey Harry, I was thinking last night when I went to bed about your animagi forms, and I realized that we forgot one important skill that a phoenix can do.”

Remus nodded. “Yes we did, flaming.”

“Flaming?” Harry asked. “What is that?”

James grinned. “That’s how phoenixes travel. They disappear in a ball of flame and appear somewhere else.”

Harry grinned. “Brilliant! Can I try it?”

Sirius laughed. “After breakfast we’ll go over it. Then you can try your wolf form again if you want.”

Harry nodded. “Why did I learn the owl so fast but I can’t even change my arm for the wolf?”

"I think it's because the wolf is a completely different creature. It's a mammal. Birds are not mammals and the wolf is larger and a lot different than an owl and a phoenix." Remus explained. "I think that once you manage to get the wolf down-pat that the lion will come just as quickly as the owl did after the phoenix."

"Alright."

Dumbledore arrived just as they were finishing off their breakfast. Harry stayed in the kitchen while Dumbledore, James, Sirius, and Remus went out to add more protective wards to the manor. Maddy and Mickey sat down at the table with him.

"You is looking sad, Harry," Maddy replied.

Mickey nodded. "Is everything alright?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm just worried about everything. I can't wait for everyone to get here. And I want to work on my animagi forms some more. I also want to know how much more protection can really be added to this place."

Mickey nodded. "That is understandable, Harry. Potter Manor is very well protected but it is not hurting anything by having it safer. Maddy and I is adding our own protection once again also."

Harry smiled. "That's good. At least we'll all be well-protected."

Maddy nodded. "Yes you is. Would you is liking more waffles, Harry?"

Harry shook his head no as he drank the rest of his apple juice. "No, I'm alright, thanks Maddy."

He watched as they got up and began to clear the table. Then he went upstairs to his room to shower and dress for the day. When he came back down, Sirius and Remus were waiting in the living room and James and Dumbledore were gone.

"Well, is everything all good now?" Harry asked.

Sirius nodded. "It's all good. Are you ready to try flaming?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah but I don't have any idea how to do it?"

Remus laughed. "I think that once you're in the phoenix form you will know. I'm going to go into the kitchen; we want you to flame there."

Harry nodded as Remus left the room and he changed into his phoenix form. He pictured the kitchen in his mind and thought, let's travel there. He looked at his wings and watched in fascination as a warm yet comforting sensation overtook him and as the sensation wore off he found himself in the kitchen. Remus was grinning at him. He decided to flame back to the living room now. He did the same thing and when he appeared there, Sirius whistled as Remus stepped back into the room.

"Great job!" Remus replied.

Harry changed back into himself and then into an owl to fly around the room for a few minutes. Then he changed back into himself and dropped down into an armchair. "That was fun!"

Remus grinned. "Ready to work on the wolf now?"

Harry nodded. "I guess so."

He started concentrating on turning his left arm into a black wolf's paw. He found it to be even more frustrating not to be able to do it. He worked at it for two hours and then he leaned back in the chair and groaned.

Sirius grinned. "It's like being right back at the beginning, Harry. Don't give up alright? I know that you can do it!"

Harry nodded. "Well, I think I'm done for today, if you don't mind. I can't even concentrate anymore I'm just too frustrated."

Sirius nodded. "That's understandable. We'll try some more tomorrow."



Harry nodded. "Uh, Uncle Sirius, Uncle Remus, just to tell you ... I haven't told anyone else about learning how to do this. Other than you, Da, and Professor McGonagall that is."

Remus glanced at Harry in surprise. "Ron and Hermione don't know?"

Harry shook his head. "No and neither does Ginny."

"Speaking of Gorgeous," Sirius replied. "I meant to ask you before. She knows about the mirror but I've never seen Ron or Hermione with you when I was talking to you."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, they don't know about the mirror either. Ginny only knows because she found out by accident. It was kind of my private thing you know, but they don't know. And I don't want them to know about my animagi just yet."

Sirius nodded. "Whatever Harry, it is your decision. But Moony and I will keep our mouths shut."

"Okay. Uncle Sirius, why do you call Ginny 'Gorgeous'?" Harry asked.

Sirius grinned. "Because she is."

Maddy stepped into the living room. "Harry, Molly Weasley is in the fire for you."

Harry nodded. "Thanks Maddy." He headed out into the entrance hall and knelt down in front of the grate. "Hi Molly."

Molly smiled warmly at him. "Hello Harry dear, how are you?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm alright. How are you?"

She smiled. "I'm fine. But Dumbledore just left after informing me that my entire family is to move into your home with you?"

Harry nodded. "I know, isn't it great?"

“Hmm,” Molly said. “I don’t know why. I mean we are perfectly safe here at the Burrow and we don’t want to intrude on your home.”

“Molly, don’t be ridiculous! Da, Uncle Sirius, Uncle Remus, and I would love to have you. Dumbledore originally wanted to place you guys at Order Headquarters and Da and I said no way. The place is terrible! No offence, Uncle Sirius.”

Sirius grinned from behind Harry. “None taken. It is sadly true.”

Harry nodded. “And we have lots of room here! I mean, it’s only the four of us and our two house elves. I can’t wait for all of you to arrive.”

Molly sighed. “Why is your home safer though?”

Sirius knelt down in front of the fire this time. “I can answer that, Molly. Potter Manor has been in the Potter family for over five centuries. The wards and protection on this place is unbelievable. The house elves have added more. James, Remus, and I have added more wards and Dumbledore himself came and took care of more wards this morning. Not to mention the fact that the manor is unplottable. Trust me, you would much rather live here than at headquarters. That place is dead depressing and filled with only Merlin knows what kind of creatures and dark arts stuff.”

Molly nodded. “Well, I already told Dumbledore that we would go, not that the man gave me much choice on the matter. How soon can you have us?”

“A.S.A.P.” Harry replied. “Da said as soon as the wards were up. They did that this morning and Dumbledore already came.”

Molly nodded. “Alright then, we’ll be there after dinner tonight. It will be me, Arthur, Ron, Ginny, Fred, and George. I’m not sure when Hermione will arrive as Dumbledore was taking care of that.”

Harry grinned. “Great! I can’t wait for all of you to get here! See you later, Molly!” Molly’s head disappeared from the fire and Harry turned around to grin at Sirius. “They’re coming today!”

Sirius laughed. "I heard. Well, I'm going to go upstairs and help Moony with some research. Why don't you fill Maddy and Mickey in on how many rooms you need?"

Harry grinned. "Got it!" He hurried off into the kitchen and told Maddy and Mickey that they would need six bedrooms prepared for guests that would be coming this evening. When he stepped back into the entrance hall there was a knock at the front door. Harry found this odd as no one really used the front door; they tended to apparate or floo. He walked over and pulled it open.

There was a really pretty young woman there with big brown eyes and bubblegum pink hair. She had a pixie look to her and a heart-shaped face. Next to her stood Hermione with her trunk next to her and Crookshanks in her arms.

"Hermione!" Harry exclaimed.

Hermione grinned as she hugged Harry. "Hi, Dumbledore told me that I was to come here right away."

Harry nodded. "Yeah. Ron and everyone won't be over until after dinner. Come on in. And who are you?"

The woman with the pink hair grinned. "I'm Tonks. I was in charge of getting Hermione here."

"Oh."

Tonks grinned. "I work for the Order and I work with your father. I'm an Auror."

Harry grinned. "That's cool. Are you going to hang around for a bit?"

She nodded. "Yeah, I just need to talk to Sirius for a minute. Is he in?"

"Yeah," he grinned as Maddy came into the room. "Hey Maddy, this is my friend Hermione. She arrived early. So you can bring her stuff up to her room and Tonks here wants to talk to Uncle Sirius."

“I’ll be right back, Harry.”

When Maddy turned towards the stairs with Hermione’s trunk and Crookshanks cage, Hermione elbowed him in the ribs. “Ow! What was that for?”

“You own a house elf!”

Harry shrugged. “Yeah so, we don’t treat them bad. And I already tried to explain that to you.”

“How dare you? After everything that I was on about last year with S.P.E.W. and after everything Winky went through and you can have the nerve to own a house elf!” She exclaimed.

“Hermione! Calm down. Maddy and Mickey have –”

“You own two!”

Harry sighed. “Maddy and Mickey are like family, okay. They are well treated and they eat most meals with us and everything. They are like equals and in case you didn’t notice they wear clothes, tidy little uniforms. They are free in pretty much everyway and Da makes sure that they have vacation time but they refuse money. Alright. And as for Dobby and Winky, Uncle Sirius has got them working at headquarters, they are as happy as can be.”

Sirius came down the stairs then. “Hey Hermione. Nymph! No way!”

Tonks laughed and threw herself into Sirius’ arms. “It’s Tonks!”

He grinned. “Aw, but Nymphadora is so cute.”

Tonks smacked him playfully. “It’s Tonks.”

“Your name is Nymphadora?” Harry asked.

Tonks nodded. “Nymphadora Tonks which is why I’m sure you can understand why I want to be called by my surname. Sirius and I are

cousins.”

Sirius nodded. “Second cousins and a bunch of removed from this end and that to be exact. But Tonks and I always got along good when we were kids. My mum hated Aunt Andromeda because she married a muggleborn. It was very un-Black of her.”

Harry grinned. “Nice to know your family didn’t completely suck.”

Sirius laughed. “Yes it does.”

Remus came down the stairs, running his fingers through his hair as he did. “What’s going on down here?” He asked and then he stopped and stared at Tonks. Harry had never seen quite that look in Remus’ eyes before but they had deepened to a dark gold. “Who are you?”

Sirius grinned as Tonks smiled up at Remus. “Moony, this is my cousin, Nymphadora Tonks; she’s an Auror and works for the Order. Tonks, this is one of my best mates and a fellow Order member, Remus Lupin.”

Remus only nodded and when he spoke he stuttered. “Um, it is ... n-nice to meet you.”

Tonks grinned. Her eyes twinkled at Remus and she turned back to look at him again, biting her bottom lip softly when he dragged his fingers through his hair. “Yeah, you too. Well, I just wanted to say hi after I dropped Hermione off but I have to get back to work now. I’ll see you guys later. It was nice meeting you Hermione, Harry, Remus, see you around.” As she turned to head out the door she tripped over a hat stand. “Oops, sorry!” She disappeared on the spot and Sirius laughed.

“Still klutzy, poor Tonks!”

Harry turned to Hermione. “Well, want me to show you around?”

Hermione nodded. “Alright. I’m sorry about what I said about the house elves, it’s just that I feel strongly about the enslavement. But you are treating them right so I won’t say anything. Are Dobby and

Winky really happy?"

"Yup. Uncle Sirius is paying Dobby but Winky still refuses wages. But they are happy." Harry explained as he brought her into the library first. "I figured that you'd like this room the best."

Hermione gasped. "Oh my! You have your own library!"

"Yeah, pretty neat eh?"

Hermione oohed and ahed at all of the appropriate places as Harry showed her around Potter Manor. He showed her the room that she would be staying in last.

"All of the bedrooms have a private bathroom and sitting room so you'll have a lot of privacy."

Hermione grinned. "Harry, this house is amazing! How many rooms are in here?"

He smiled back. "Thanks. I'm not sure exactly, I know there are thirty rooms in the East Wing and thirty in the West Wing, then there's all of the ones in the middle like the common room and the study and the kitchen and the library. I don't know there's a lot."

"Oh my! I just realized! I was wondering why the outside of this place looked so familiar! Is this Glasgow Hall?"

"Er yeah, we just call it Potter Manor though." Harry replied.

Hermione squealed in delight. "Harry! You live in Glasgow Hall — oh my god! That means that your father is the Duke and wow."

Harry rolled his eyes. "You're so weird sometimes. My Da's a duke?"

Hermione nodded. "Didn't you know? Well, I assume he is, I mean it says that Glasgow Hall is owned by the Duke of Draíochta."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, that kind of sounds familiar. I don't think we dwell on it."

“Dwell on it?” She shrieked. “Glasgow Hall! The Duke of Draíochta meaning magical or enchanting! Harry, this place is like a national landmark, a well-known mansion even in the muggle world! It’s known for its Gaelic name and for ...” She sighed. “Never mind. You obviously don’t realize the historical significance of your own home.” When he continued to stare at her in amusement she sighed. “Okay, change of subject. I wanted to mention earlier, did you notice the way that Professor Lupin and Tonks were looking at each other?”

“Normally? Why?”

Hermione rolled her eyes. “Boys! No, there was some definite attraction there.”

“Uncle Remus? No way!”

Hermione laughed. “I think so. Well, you’ll just have to wait and see what happens.”

Harry shook his head. “No, I mean, Tonks is got to be like twenty-four and –”

“She’ll be twenty-four in November, she told me.”

“Exactly and Uncle Remus is thirty-three.”

Hermione grinned. “So?”

Harry shrugged. “Well, well ... never mind! Let’s go downstairs.”

Hermione laughed. “Alright, let’s go but I was only saying.”

As Harry headed downstairs he thought about what Hermione had said. Uncle Remus and Tonks? They had only just met. Besides, he remembered Uncle Sirius and James saying that Uncle Remus never let any women in. He never had because he was too worried about being a werewolf. He shook the thoughts from his mind and instead decided to see if Hermione wanted to watch a movie. Since she was muggleborn, she probably would be able to pick out a good one.

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Harry and Hermione spent the afternoon watching movies as the day turned out to be pretty dreary and rainy. James came home just before dinner and headed into the living room.

“Harry, Tonks told me that Hermione had arrived.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah and Molly said everyone else would be here after dinner.”

“Hello, Mr. Potter,” Hermione replied.

James smiled at her. “Hi Hermione, how are you? And please call me James.”

She grinned. “Good. I love your house, James.”

Harry grinned. “But she’s very disappointed in us because of the whole house elf thing.”

James laughed. “Well, there’s nothing that I can do about that. Besides, something smells amazing at the moment, what’s Maddy making?”

Harry grinned. “I believe she mentioned something about a pot roast.”

James licked his lips. “I love her so much.”

Harry laughed. “She said that you were having a tough day so she was going to make your favourite meal.”

James grinned. “Good. Well, let’s go eat then.”

They headed into the kitchen just as Maddy was serving the food. “Good timing, James.”

“Maddy, I love you.”



Maddy laughed. "You are a bad boy, James. I is only making your favourite. Mickey, come on now, it is dinner time."

Mickey stepped into the room with Sirius and Remus behind him. "I is only getting Remus and Sirius."

They all sat down and began to scoop out some of the delicious pot roast with mashed potatoes and gravy and corn and fresh bread. It was all delicious.

"So Hermione, how are your parents doing? Were they upset that you had to leave so early?" James asked.

Hermione shrugged. "No, they weren't really upset. I mean, they understand what is going on so they know I'll be safer here. They are okay otherwise. They have some big dental convention coming up anyway. I believe they were making a trip to San Francisco."

"Your parents are dentists?" Remus asked.

Hermione nodded. "Yup, both of them."

Sirius grinned. "No offence, but I have no idea why people would want to look into other people's mouths on a daily basis."

Hermione laughed. "Well, they like it I guess. I've never really asked them. They're very busy people."

Sirius shrugged. "I'm just saying, gross job."

Hermione smiled. "I suppose. Like I said they're very busy people so I've never really asked them about it."

Harry grinned and decided that it was best to probably change the subject. Hermione always seemed a bit touchy when it came to her parents. "Da, did you find out anything else about Voldemort?"

James shook his head. "No, I'm afraid I didn't. He really does seem to be laying low for the moment. Dumbledore approved of headquarters for the Order though."

"Excuse me, but everyone keeps talking about this Order, what is it?" Hermione asked.

"The Order of the Phoenix. It's an organization that Dumbledore began during the first war against Voldemort. We're in the process of bringing it back to help fight against him." Sirius explained.

Hermione nodded. "I see."

They had only just finished dinner when Foolish began to bark madly. Harry only grinned. "He always does that when someone flooes here."

He hurried into the entrance hall just in time to see Ginny pop out of the fireplace. She stumbled and he reached forward to catch her. She laughed when he caught her around the waist.

"Thanks Harry, I never can come out of these things straight."

He grinned and wondered briefly why his heart was pounding suddenly. "No problem." He pulled her out of the way to stand next to Ron who was grinning.

"This is your house, mate?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, it's pretty great."

Molly, Arthur, Fred, and George came in next with a mixture of trunks and cages and bags. Everyone was talking at once as Maddy and Mickey came into the room with James. James instructed them to bring the bags up to everyone's room.

"Hello everyone," James replied. "I see that you all made it. Where's Percy?"

Molly burst into tears and buried her face on her husband's shoulder. Fred, George, Ron, and Ginny all looked angry.

"What happened?" Harry asked.

“Percy left.” Ginny replied.

“Left?”

Ron nodded. “He got promoted in the ministry. But Dad says that he thinks the ministry just wants him to keep an eye on anyone who is associated with Dumbledore. No one is too happy with Dumbledore at the moment because of the whole You-Know-Who thing. So he left and accused Dad of all sorts of terrible things. It was horrible.”

Ginny nodded. “He said how he was struggling with Dad’s bad reputation at work and how he was lucky to have even been promoted. It was a terrible row. Finally he just said that he didn’t want to be a part of the family anymore and he walked out.”

“Wow,” Harry replied.

George nodded. “He’s a git!”

“The world’s largest git!” Fred replied.

James slapped his hands together and grinned. “Well then, why don’t I show Molly and Arthur to their room? Harry, why don’t you show Ron, Ginny, Fred, and George around the manor?”

Harry grinned as he reached down to pat Foolish on the head. “Alright, so do you guys want to see my Quidditch pitch?”

Ron goggled at him. “You’ve got a Quidditch pitch?”

Hermione stepped into the entrance hall. “Trust me, Ron, the Quidditch pitch is nothing compared to the rest of the house.”

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## Chapter 26: Going Crazy

**Author's Notes:** Please review!! i like to think that this is the chapter u've all been waiting for!! newly edited

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## **Chapter XXVI – Going Crazy**

If Ron had goggled at the idea of a Quidditch pitch, his mouth had only dropped open wider as Harry took him throughout the rest of the house. Fred and George had been just as impressed but Ginny had been all for the indoor pool. Harry had only grinned at her excitement of going swimming.

After the tour of the house, Harry brought them upstairs to show them their rooms. Fred and George were awed and pleased to be given separate rooms for once and Ron couldn't believe that he had his own bedroom and his own bathroom. But Ginny's expression had been priceless.

Maddy had chosen for her the guest room that was all done in lavender and white. It was a beautiful room that Harry's grandmother had decorated herself when she was the mistress of Potter Manor almost thirty-five years ago. The furniture was all solid oak and the room was painted in a soft lavender colour. The Queen-sized bed had a white lace quilt on it. It was large and had a huge bathroom with a whirl-pool tub. Harry knew that it was one of the best guest rooms in the house. He was pleased that Maddy had chosen that particular room to give to Ginny. Ginny was thoroughly impressed.

"Oh Harry! It's so beautiful!" She cried out as she turned to throw herself into his arms for a hug.

He grinned as he hugged her back but then his grin faded when he realized that she was pressed up very close to him. This did not feel like the Ginny he normally hugged. It felt ... right, almost as if she belonged in his arms in exactly that spot. Her hair smelt like strawberries and when he pulled away he wondered if he was going crazy.

"Uh, yeah, you're welcome," he replied. He had to get out of this room. His brain was playing tricks on him.

He looked around nervously to see if Ron, Fred, George, or Hermione had noticed his moment of insanity but no one seemed to have noticed it. He remembered how his heart had sped up earlier too when he caught Ginny from falling out of the fireplace. *What was wrong with him*, he thought. They left the room and headed downstairs into the living room. The room was empty so they made themselves comfortable. Fred spoke first.

“So Harry, what do you know about this Order thing? Mum and Dad won’t tell us anything about it.”

Harry shrugged. “Not too much really. Da told me that the Order of the Phoenix was started by Dumbledore during the first war and that they plan to reassemble it now or they have or they’re working on it. I’m not sure yet exactly where they are in that sense. Da says that it’s even more important to get the Order together now since the ministry is refusing to believe that Voldemort is back. They will be working on trying to bring down Voldemort or stop him before he gets too powerful once again. They are using Uncle Sirius’ parents’ old house as headquarters. It’s dead depressing. Dumbledore wanted all of you to go live there but Da and I decided that no way was that happening and told Dumbledore you were coming to the manor! Anyway, the organization is to fight against Voldemort. That’s all I know.”

George grinned. “Well, it’s more then we did, mate.”

Ron nodded. “Mum and Dad won’t tell us anything about it because we’re not of age.”

“But we are of age!” Fred exclaimed. “Mum just likes to keep us in the dark.”

George nodded. “It’s true. She wants to treat us all like children. She won’t admit that we’re growing up. I mean, look, James told you all about the Order.”

Harry shrugged. “Not really. I mean, I know the basis of it and I’ve only been to headquarters because I went with Uncle Sirius to see if it was fit for human inhabitation but other then that I don’t know

anything. It's not like I know what they do or what their plans are or anything."

Ginny grinned at him. "It's not a big deal, Harry. I don't think that they're going to tell us anything anyway."

Harry shook his head. "I don't think my Da will keep me completely in the dark. After all, it was me who saw Voldemort come back last week."

Ginny gulped. "How are you doing with that and all?"

"Ginny!" Hermione exclaimed. "Harry doesn't want to talk about that! Have some respect!"

Harry glared at Hermione. "You're right; I don't want to talk about it. But I never did tell you guys what happened and I think that you should know."

"Didn't Dumbledore tell us?" Fred asked.

Harry shook his head. "Not really no, he left a lot out and he only really said that Voldemort was back and that he had killed Cedric."

Ginny reached over and took Harry's hand in hers. "I can only imagine how bad the dreams are."

Harry had glanced down to where she was holding his hand in hers. She had done that a million times in the past two years, but this time it felt different. He looked up into her eyes and managed a small smile. "Yeah, they're not exactly pleasant."

He started from the beginning, telling them everything that had happened in the maze up until the point where he and Cedric had decided to take the cup together. He paused for a moment and Ginny gave his hand a gentle squeeze.

"Harry, don't you dare blame yourself for Cedric's death!"

He turned to look at her, wondering how she knew that that was what

had been eating him up inside since that night. If he had just taken the cup on his own like Cedric had said, he never would have died. "Gin, I told him to take the cup with me. I could have taken it myself."

"But you didn't and that's because you're selfless and you always want to do what is best for others," Ginny replied. "But you didn't know that the cup was a portkey and neither did Cedric, so don't you dare blame yourself for this!"

Hermione nodded. "Ginny's right, Harry. You can't be blamed for something that you had no control over."

He looked down at his hand, which was still being held comfortably by Ginny's. "Alright, I know that you guys are right. But I can't help the way that I feel."

Fred nodded. "That sounds reasonable, mate, so what happened then?"

Harry then proceeded to tell them all about the graveyard and the potion and the duel. When he was finished, they were all staring at him in shock. He stood up and walked to the other side of the room to look out the window. It was dark outside now. He felt arms encircle his waist from behind and he knew by the scent of strawberries and spring that it was Ginny. He turned around to pull her close, needing her touch for comfort just as much as he wondered why he needed it at all.

The touch was normal. Ginny was always hugging him, or squeezing his hand in comfort. It was the type of person she was. Just like with Colin, her best friend. She had no qualms about throwing herself into the arms of her friends when she was happy or sad or when they needed comfort. He was used to it and he knew that she did this to everyone. She was a giving person like that. But why did it feel so different suddenly? Why did it make him want to brush back the soft red hair and lay his hand on her cheek? And why did it make him want to kiss her? He shook the thoughts from his head and again wondered if maybe he was going crazy. After all, he had been a little stressed lately; what with worrying about Voldemort and what he was doing and with having all those nightmares at night? Not to mention

his animagi lessons and trying not to worry his father. He grinned to himself as she pulled away; yeah, he was only imagining things.

“Well, now that you guys know everything, um what do you want to do?” Harry asked.

George grinned. “I don’t know; let’s play a game or something.”

“What kind of game?” Hermione asked.

Fred shrugged. “I don’t know. Got any suggestions?”

“What kind of game, though?” Harry asked. “Like a board game, a card game? What?”

Ron yawned loudly. “Whatever works.”

“Do you have any muggle games, Harry?” Ginny asked. “Because I noticed that you have a lot of muggle things?”

Harry grinned. “Yeah, I’ve got quite a few muggle board games. Da always picks them up. He says that Mum got him hooked into living in the best of both worlds.” He got up and went over into the cabinet in the far corner of the living room. “Let’s see, we’ve got *Clue*, *Monopoly*, *Pictionary*, *Scrabble*, this trivia game thing, and yeah that’s pretty much it.”

“Ooh, let’s play *Pictionary*,” Hermione suggested. “That’s a fun game.”

Harry laughed. “Alright. Is everyone else okay with that one?”

Everyone shrugged so Harry pulled out the game. Hermione explained the rules and they shuffled off into teams; Ron and Hermione, Fred and George, and Harry and Ginny. They played for almost two hours. It was an interesting choice because where Ginny and Ron benefited from having someone who knew stuff about muggles on their team, Fred and George had trouble. Harry and Ginny won and they laughed as Fred and George complained about the unfair situation. Ginny just told them that they were sore losers.



It was almost midnight by that time so they decided to head upstairs to bed with plans of a fun-filled day for tomorrow. Harry went into his room and closed the door. Now that he was alone, he wanted to think about what had happened that evening with Ginny. He couldn't possibly really be having feelings like this about her. It had to be stress. After all, Ginny was Ron's little sister and one of his really good friends. This wasn't happening.

He closed his eyes and went to sleep; happily agreeing that he was only stressed out or going crazy.

\*\*\*\*\*

*She was standing in front of him, her arms wrapped comfortably around his waist as she looked up into his eyes with a half-smile on her face. Her lips were set in a half-smile, half-pout as she grinned. Her hair fell down her back in waves that caught the sunlight and her eyes were bright with laughter.*

*"Kiss me already," she teased as she leaned in closer.*

*He could only grin at her as she stood up on her toes. They inched forward, closer and closer. His lips were inches away from hers. He could feel her hot breath on his lips and he knew that he wanted that mouth on his more than anything else in the world. Her eyes were smiling at him as he moved closer. Then he grinned, a slow wicked grin that made her sigh before he dropped his mouth down to hers and –*

"HARRY!" Ron bellowed

Harry bolted upright in bed, dragging his fingers through his hair.  
"Who? What?"

Ron grinned as he leaned against the doorjamb of Harry's bedroom door. "Having an interesting dream there?"

Harry shrugged. "Why?"

Ron grinned. "No particular reason, you just had a big sloppy grin on your face."

Harry nodded. "Well, it wasn't about Voldemort for once, so yeah I guess I would be grinning." He tried to bring his dream back to the surface but it was slipping away from him. There had been a beautiful girl and he'd wanted her more than anything. But who had she been?

"It's almost ten and Mum just woke me, something about it being rude to sleep so late in someone else's home. So I decided to come wake you up." Ron explained.

Harry grinned. "Yeah, no problem. We'll get a game of Quidditch in this afternoon if the weather holds out. If not, we still have the pool."

Ron nodded. "Yeah, that will be cool. I haven't been swimming yet this year. It looks like it's going to rain outside today though so Quidditch might be out." He paused for a minute, turning to close the door behind him before he spoke. "Harry, I just wanted to say that ... you have a really wicked house. I know that I can sometimes be a real git about money and stuff like that but, I'm alright with this house."

Harry grinned. "That's good to hear. I was a little nervous that you would get all jealous or something like you did about the tournament. It's not like I asked for all this stuff. But Potter Manor has been in my family for like five centuries. And I personally think that it's about time that we get to hang out at my place for a bit. Maybe your mum will relax a bit while she's here."

Ron laughed. "I doubt it. She's not going to know what to do with herself so she'll probably be hounding us non-stop."

Harry grinned. "Nah, she'll find something to do. After all, Uncle Sirius and Uncle Remus should be here all day. Hey, I wanted to ask you. Are you and Padma still an item at the moment?"

Ron shook his head. "No, we broke up on the last day of school. We both agreed that it wasn't going anywhere so there was no point of staying together over the summer. Why do you ask?"

Harry shrugged. "Well, I was going to see if it was alright with Da to invite her over if you wanted but never mind then."

Ron laughed. "Yeah, I suppose that it would be pointless now." His grin faded for a minute as Harry jumped out of bed and began to search for some clothes to put on. He didn't want to go downstairs in his pyjamas with the house so full of people. "Is Hermione still dating Krum?"

Harry shrugged. "I have no idea. I don't think so; I mean he does live in Bulgaria. That has to be hard to carry on a relationship when he lives so far away. Why?"

"I-I just don't think that he's good for her."

Harry grinned. "Why don't you just ask her out yourself already?"

"What?" Ron said, paling. "T-t-that would be rid-ridiculous. I don't like her that way!"

Harry only nodded, wondering how long Ron was going to deny what he was feeling. "Hey, whatever you say. So what are Bill and Charlie doing lately?"

Ron shrugged. "The usual. Charlie is still in Romania. But Bill does have some interesting news. He's moved back to London to work at Gringotts and to be closer to home. He's working for the Order too. Guess who else is working at Gringotts?"

"Who?"

"Fleur Delacour. Last I heard, Bill was helping her to uh ... eemprove her Eenglish."

Harry laughed. "She liked him quite a bit when he came to see me before the third task. And Bill did say she was beautiful."

Ron nodded. "Yeah, well, that's what happens. Are you ready yet?"

Harry grinned. "Yeah, I just have to brush my teeth. You can go downstairs and eat you know. Maddy and Mickey serve breakfast whenever."

Ron shrugged. "I'll just wait for you."

Harry nodded. He went into his bathroom to do his business and brush his teeth before he went down into the kitchen with Ron. Maddy was standing at the counter and she turned at the sound of them in the doorway.

"No Harry, I is having everyone eat in the dining room since there is so many people here." Maddy replied.

Harry nodded. "Alright."

They went into the dining hall and Andrew Potter nodded at them. "Bout time you came down, Harry. You're guests have been left unattended."

Harry grinned. "Sorry Grandda, but there are other people in this house."

Sirius laughed. "Yeah, Mr. Potter, there's me!"

Andrew snorted. "You're still here! Boy, I never could get rid of you."

Gwendolynn laughed. "Oh stop it, Andrew, Sirius has always been welcome in our home."

Harry shook his head as his grandparents started to bicker back and forth. He took a seat at the table next to Molly and Sirius. "Have you been awake long, Molly?"

Molly smiled warmly at Harry. "Not at all dear. I just wish that there was something that I could do."

Harry grinned. "You can. Just hang out and relax. You can read a book from the library or go swimming or play some games in the living room or go hang out in the gardens or play Quidditch."

“Hmm,” Molly said. “But I mean, I should be doing work.”

Harry shrugged. “Well, there isn’t any work for you to do. Maddy and Mickey take care of everything. I’m sure that you could ask them if there was something you could do. Maddy might let you help for a bit but mostly you’re going to be relaxing.”

Molly sighed. “I feel useless if I’m not doing work.”

Harry laughed. “Like I said, you can ask.”

Sirius leaned over close to Harry. “Do you want to practice later on tonight for a while?”

“Okay, before I go to bed.”

Sirius nodded. “Got it.”

Harry helped himself to some bacon and eggs from the table and he glanced up at the sound in the doorway. Ginny stood there in denim cut-offs and a green tank top. Her hair was pulled back in a long thick braid that hung down her back and she was barefoot. Harry almost swallowed his tongue. She looked incredible, he thought. When had she grown up to be so beautiful? She didn’t look like anyone’s little sister to him. She looked like a beautiful young woman. Her chocolate brown eyes were smiling as she said good morning to the room in general and her hair, the colour of wild fire, was shining from the sunlight coming through the window. He gulped and turned back to his food, hoping that no one had noticed the sudden pull of attraction that he was getting towards her.

He wondered again if he was going crazy. But two days in a row? He shook the thoughts from his head. It didn’t matter anyway if he found himself attracted to Ginny. She was Ron’s little sister. It was never going to happen between them. Besides, she had a boyfriend. He wasn’t going to do anything to sabotage her relationship with Michael. Even if he was a little jealous. Michael got to kiss her and touch her and be with her. If he so much as sees Michael lean in to give her a hug he was going to –

“Harry, are you with us?” Fred asked.

“What?” Harry asked, looking over at Fred, a little disturbed at where his thoughts had been going.

Fred laughed. “Daydreaming? Anyway, it’s raining again so we were thinking of going to hang out in the indoor pool all day. Is that alright?”

Harry nodded. “Oh, yeah. That sounds great. There are extra bathing suits in the pool cabin if anyone needs one.”

Ron grinned. “We all got suits.”

Harry cursed himself for not paying attention. He was being stupid after all. He shook the thoughts from his head and finished his breakfast before heading back upstairs to change. He was the first person to walk into the swimming room. Windows surrounded two walls of the room, large ones that went from floor to ceiling. It was thundering and lightning outside because of the storm but it was warm in the room. He checked the temperature of the pool, pleased to see that it was at 78 degrees. He went over to the pool cabin and pulled out enough towels for everyone, dropping them on the chairs around the pool. He took his glasses off and placed them on a table before he dived into the water.

It was refreshing and it felt good to swim through the water. He was on his eighth lap when Fred and George came into the room.

“How’s the water?” George asked.

Harry grinned. “Brilliant. I pulled some towels out so just claim one.”

The twins nodded before they dived into the water. Ron came in just as the twins dived in. He walked into the water a bit more slowly and hissed out that it was cold. Fred and George took it upon themselves to grab him and throw him into the deep end. They were all laughing by the time that Hermione and Ginny came into the room. Harry’s jaw dropped open when they both took a seat on the edge of the pool.

Hermione was wearing a royal blue bikini; something that Harry had never pictured her in, in his life. Hermione was just always so modest. She looked great though and by the stunned and shocked look on Ron's face, Harry would say that she had met her mark. Ginny, however, looked incredible. She wore a chocolate brown bathing suit with gold stripes. It brought out the colour in her eyes and made Harry painfully aware of the body beneath the clothes. She had incredible curves and her skin was milk-white and glowed. He'd bet money that it felt as soft as it looked. She had taken down her hair and it flowed over her shoulders and down to her bum in soft waves. He licked his lips and was incredibly thankful that he was under the water at the moment.

"Harry, this is such a great room," Ginny replied as Harry tried to prevent himself from swallowing his tongue.

"Yeah, it is."

He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to not think of how great his good friend Ginny looked, but that only made him see her in his mind. He pushed himself backwards in the water and decided that swimming around was probably the best way to go and would stop people from noticing his dilemma.

Once the girls were in the water, Fred and George suggested that they play Marco Polo. Hermione had laughed at this.

"You know, Marco Polo really is the dumbest name for this game."

George looked bewildered by this. "Why? Isn't that the name of the guy who invented it?"

Harry laughed. "Actually, he was an Italian muggle trader who went to China and brought back spices. I don't think that he had anything to do with the game."

Hermione nodded. "Exactly! Harry, I'm surprised that you knew that."

Harry shrugged. "Da and Uncle Remus made sure that I learned muggle history and geography and stuff like that before Hogwarts."

Fred grinned. "Alright, but other than the fact that the name of the game is dumb, do you want to play it?"

Harry laughed. "Sure do. Not it!" Everyone soon followed suit but Ginny called it out last.

Ginny grinned. "Hey!"

"You're it, Gin!" Fred called out.

Ginny sighed. She closed her eyes and began to spin in the water. Once she was dizzy enough she began to call out 'Marco'. Harry watched her as she carefully swam through the water with her arms outstretched. She seemed to be zeroing in on him. She came closer and he smiled to himself at the way that her soft lips were partly open as she hurried towards the sound. He thought they looked perfect and like she was waiting for a kiss. Not that he had any plans of kissing her of course. Her hands slid up his chest and her eyes flew open.

"Got you!"

She swam away laughing as Harry took deep calming breaths. Her touch had caused his stomach to knot up, but the feeling hadn't been unpleasant. He shook the thoughts from his head and began to spin in the center of the pool before he called out 'Marco'. He heard Ron say 'Polo' from somewhere nearby so he headed in that general direction.

They played for an hour. Hermione had turned out to be brilliant at the game and hadn't managed to get caught once. Fred and George had deemed this wrong so when the game ended, they had picked her up and carried her out of the pool.

"Put me down, you idiots!" Hermione exclaimed, laughing as they held on tighter.

"Idiots?" Fred asked in a shocked voice.



“That hurts us, Hermione,” George said.

Then on the count of three, they tossed her into the pool laughing. When she came up for air she was glaring at them. “I’m going to kill you two!”

Ginny laughed. “That could be difficult. They’re sneaky.”

Harry grinned as Ron hurried over to make sure that Hermione was okay as he thought about the conversation he and Ron had had that morning. It was VERY obvious that Ron didn’t like Hermione alright, he thought with a grin. He turned his attention back to Ginny as she climbed back into the pool with a beach ball.

“Anyone up for a game?”

They all agreed to play. Ron, Hermione, and Harry were on one team and Fred, George, and Ginny were on the other. Ginny had some trouble getting the ball when it was too high as she only stood five-foot three but somehow, their team had won. Fred and George decided to get out of the pool then and to go work on a few more of their inventions. So Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny all made themselves comfortable around the table in the corner to eat the lunch that Maddy and Mickey had brought out to them.

“Fred and George have been making lots more stuff this summer,” Ron said. “But to make all that, they need money.”

Ginny nodded. “Well, they did make a lot of money last year selling their stuff.”

Harry took a drink of his pumpkin juice before speaking. “They have money, lots of money.”

Hermione glanced over at Harry suspiciously. “You know where they got it, don’t you?”

Ginny grinned. “You gave them your Triwizard earnings.”

Harry looked over at her in surprise. “Yeah I did. I didn’t want it. It

should have been Cedric's and since he wasn't around to collect it, I told the twins too. They know how to use it. I told them that people are going to need something to laugh about."

Ginny leaned over and kissed Harry's cheek. "You're too nice sometimes. Thank you for giving it to them. I know it means a lot to them."

Harry grinned at her, his cheek was tingling in a way that it definitely had never done before. It wasn't like it was the first time that Ginny had kissed his cheek.

"Hey Harry, after we're done eating do you want to have a noodle war in the pool?" Ron suggested.

"Noodle war?" Hermione asked.

Ron nodded. "Yeah, with you up on my shoulders and Ginny up on Harry's shoulders; then you know, we battle it out with noodles?"

Ginny laughed. "That sounds like fun."

Harry nodded. "Sure."

They went back into the pool and Harry helped Ginny climb up to sit on his shoulders. Her hands were fisted in his hair and he grinned. "Are you alright up there, Gin?"

She nodded. "Yeah, I just have to get used to being so high."

He slid his hands up her legs, taking a firmer grip on her and thinking that her skin was just as soft as it looked. "I won't let you fall."

She smiled down at him. "I know."

Hermione was sitting up on Ron's shoulders now as well. They each had a noodle in their hands so they started sword fighting with them. All four of them were laughing as they fought, the soft noodles slapping each other back and forth. Ron leaned forward a bit so that Hermione could get one good jab and Ginny stumbled backwards.

Harry grabbed her waist and held on, catching her as they both fell back into the water.

She laughed as they came back up for air. "You let me fall."

He grinned at her. "But I still caught you."

She grinned back and pushed on his head to send him under. When he came up for air she was swimming away, laughing. He grabbed her leg and yanked her under the water, pulling her towards him. He held her close in his arms, grinning down at her.

"Think that was funny, do you?"

She bit her bottom lip to keep from laughing as she tried to wiggle out of his grip. "Maybe."

He laughed but at the same time his stomach was knotting itself up again. Her wiggling in his arms was hardly helping matters. He picked her up and held her close and then he gave her a wicked grin.

Ginny's mouth dropped open. "Harry, don't!"

He only grinned and threw her into the water. She came up for air spluttering and glared at him.

"I'm going to get you for that!"

Harry grinned at her. "You got to catch me first."

He began to swim away from her quickly. He was a pretty good swimmer and he was fast so he slowed down a bit so that she could catch him. He felt her tug on his leg and he turned to face her.

"Caught me."

She grinned at him and yanked him under the water again. When he came back up she only smiled. "I always will." Then she swam over to the other end of the pool where Hermione was calling after her.

Harry watched her swim away, her pretty legs sliding through the water and he gulped. He had just realized one important thing ... he wasn't going crazy after all. These feelings were definitely real.

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## Chapter 27: Power

**Author's Notes:** okay i just randomly came up with this idea out of nowhere so odnt evne ask. ive read a LOT of stories that mix in a lot of stuff James talks about. jsut to tell us guys the goddesses Corra and Blodeuwedd are real tho i did alter their stories to my purpose. and i changed a lot of other stuff. rem this story is AU so it is allowed to be random!! thanks! please review!! newly edited

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## Chapter XXVII – Power

Ginny lay in the beautiful bedroom that she had been given to stay in at Potter Manor lost in thought. She was trying to go to sleep but she couldn't make herself tired even if it was after midnight. Her thoughts kept drifting back to the day that she had had.

Potter Manor was incredible and she loved everything about it. It was beautiful and fun and best of all was that it felt like a home. James had done a good job at making it feel like a home, especially without his wife. But this room she was in was just so beautiful. She had fallen in love with it. It was so ... girly and frilly, something that Ginny didn't really allow herself too often since she had grown up with so many brothers. She had thanked Maddy for picking her out such a beautiful room and the elf had informed her that Harry's grandmother had had it designed because she had thought that the rest of Glasgow Hall was too masculine so she had wanted one female room. Ginny had laughed at this, even if the room was incredible. But it wasn't Potter Manor that she was thinking about. It was a certain occupant of the manor named Harry Potter.

He had been acting differently today.

The day had been fun. They had spent almost the entire day in the pool playing water games but it had been Harry that she had paid attention too. It had started, if she was going to be honest with herself, when she had arrived and stumbled out of the fireplace. When his arms had encircled her waist her stomach had knotted itself up and her heart had beat quickly in her breast. She had cursed herself thoroughly about it. After all, she had gotten over her stupid girlish crush on Harry before the Chamber incident. Now they were good friends and she liked her friendship status with him. They weren't best friends, she had Colin, Luna, and Dee for that, but they were close and the feeling that she had gotten when he touched her had not been a feeling of friendship. But she had pushed it aside, painfully pinching herself that night to remind her of her great boyfriend Michael and she had come back to her senses.

Well, until the dream.

That night she had dreamt of lying next to the lake at Hogwarts on a blanket with Harry. They had been staring up at the stars and holding hands. Then he had leaned over and kissed her. It had been wonderful and her dream kiss had been so much better than any kiss that she had ever shared with Michael. But when she had woken up, she had cursed herself angrily and reminded herself that she did not have feelings for Harry.

But then today had happened.

It had started that morning when she had walked into the dining room and from the corner of her eye she swore that she had seen those intense green eyes staring at her with ... interest. But she had dismissed the idea quickly because her dream had still been too fresh in her mind. Then when she had come into the swimming room with Hermione, Harry's mouth had physically dropped open and his eyes had turned an intense shade of green. But again, her dream was simply still too close to the surface. But the way he had been acting all day. Why, if he had been any other boy, Ginny would think that he had been flirting with her? But Harry would never flirt with her, right?

She sighed and rolled over, snuggling closer into the warm bed. She

had to be imagining things. Her mind was simply going into overdrive and she was going crazy. She didn't like Harry that way anymore and he only liked her as a friend. He couldn't possibly view her as anything else.

She bolted upright at the scratching noise coming from her door. Ginny climbed out of bed, tugging the hem of her tank top down over her pyjama pants before she pulled open her bedroom door. She grinned in relief when she saw Foolish sitting there, his tail hitting the floor happily.

"Hey handsome," she whispered as she knelt down to scratch him behind the ears. "What are you doing here? It's late." She gasped when a figure came out of the shadows. Her heart caught in her throat when she realized that it was Harry and that the feelings running through her were anything but friendly.

"Sorry to scare you," Harry's voice whispered back as he knelt down too. "I just came to find this guy. He deserted me for a woman I see." Foolish rolled over and turned his stomach towards Ginny so that she could rub and Harry shook his head. "Suck-up."

Ginny managed a small laugh as she glanced up at the sleep-tousled black hair and the faded white tee shirt that Harry was wearing over his black pyjama pants with gold snitches on them. He looked ... hell, he looked sexy, she thought. She shook the thoughts from her head and looked back down at Foolish. "He missed me. Didn't you, boy?"

Foolish nuzzled his face into her hand and she giggled.

Harry sighed. "Guess so. He doesn't usually leave my room at night. I guess I've been replaced."

Ginny smiled up at him. "No, you haven't been replaced. He just knew I'd be happy to see him. Do you mind if he stays with me tonight, Harry?"

Harry shook his head. "No, he can sleep wherever he wants. Goodnight Gin."

Ginny stood up and nodded. "Goodnight."

She watched him walk down the hall until he disappeared behind a closed door towards the end. She gestured for Foolish to follow her before she closed the door behind her. Foolish made himself comfortable on the end of the bed and Ginny laughed as she climbed in and covered up. He was a beautiful dog and she had fallen in love with him on first sight. She sat up to scratch him behind the ears as he fell asleep, snoring a bit. She smiled to herself before lying back down and thinking about the encounter in the hallway.

Ginny had definitely not been having friendly emotions towards Harry. Her heart had pounded quickly and she had gotten a tingly feeling in the pit of her stomach when she had focused her eyes on those emerald green ones. He had looked downright sexy with his hair all rumpled from sleep. His lean muscles from Quidditch could be seen easily through the old faded tee shirt he had worn. She sighed and shook the thoughts from her head. They were completely inappropriate. She and Harry were friends, nothing else and she refused to develop another kind of crush on him.

With that determination in her mind, she closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep dreaming of a raven-haired boy with emerald green eyes.

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The weeks passed after that with Harry silently lusting after Ginny. He dreamed about her most nights and woke up in the mornings aching to hold her and kiss her. But he refused to act on it. He didn't want to ruin their friendship and he didn't want to be the cause of her break-up with Michael. His birthday came and gone as well as Ginny's birthday only the day before. Nothing new had come up with the Order at least that they knew of and the summer was more fun with the Weasleys and Hermione living with them at the manor. It also helped Harry to keep his mind off of what had happened in June and off of wondering what Voldemort was up too. It was hard to believe that the summer was almost over.

Harry woke up one morning in August to someone calling his name. He was not too pleased to be woken up as he had been having an

incredible dream about a beautiful girl again. He tried to remember who the girl was in his dreams, for some reason he thought it was Ginny. But considering the way that he had been feeling towards her lately, he realized that it probably was. When he opened his eyes James, Sirius, and Remus were all sitting on his bed.

“Um, hi,” he murmured as he sat up yawning. He made sure that the blankets were still wrapped tightly around him as his dream was still really close to the surface.

James grinned. “Um, hi to you too. We need to talk to you.”

Harry nodded, letting out another yawn. “I gathered that, so what’s up?”

Sirius gave him a knowing grin. “Cold this morning, Harry?”

Harry blushed. “Yes.”

Sirius grinned. “Hmm, those dreams ...”

“Padfoot, leave him alone.” Remus replied. “Harry, we’ve got a problem.”

“What kind of problem?”

“Well, Madam Bones seems to think that Hogwarts will be safer without you there,” Remus replied quickly as if he thought blurting it out would soften the blow.

“WHAT?”

James grabbed Harry’s hand. “Harry, we’re not going to let this happen. You’re going back to school.”

“But, but why?” Harry asked. “I thought that she was going to be a great minister. Why doesn’t she want me to go back?”

Sirius sighed. “Because of what happened in June.”



“But she doesn’t believe me! She has the whole wizarding world thinking that I’m some sort of loony!” Harry exclaimed.

James nodded. “Harry, something is very odd about this entire thing. We will figure it out and you will be going back to school. Dumbledore’s not going to let you get kicked out. He gets the final word as Headmaster. However, I received an owl earlier this morning. We have to attend a trial next week to discuss this ... problem.”

Harry groaned. “This is bloody ridiculous!”

Remus nodded. “It’s more than bloody ridiculous, but we have to go. The three of us are going with you and Dumbledore and Minerva should both be there as well. We’re not going to let this happen.”

“You swear that I’ll get to go back?” Harry asked; a hint of desperation in his voice.

James pulled Harry into his arms for a hug. “I don’t swear. I promise. I will not let them kick you out of Hogwarts for such a stupid reason. If you’re going to get kicked out it should at least be for a good prank. Okay?”

Harry nodded as he hugged his father tightly. “Okay.”

James pulled back to smile at him. “I need to talk to you about something else too.”

“What?” He asked.

James turned to his friends. “Moony, Padfoot, can I talk to Harry alone for a bit now?”

Sirius and Remus nodded. “Oh yeah, see you two later.”

They left, closing the door behind them and Harry looked up at his father. “Da, what’s going on?”

James smiled at him. “Nothing bad, I just want to talk to you.”

“Alright, about what?”

“First, I’ve noticed that I haven’t heard a peep out of you since the first week back. Have you stopped having nightmares? I can’t even hear you thrashing around in your sleep. On one hand, this is a good thing because I’m hoping the nightmares are gone but on the other hand I’m wondering what you did. Is everything alright?”

Harry sighed. “Um, yeah.”

“Uh-huh, what are you keeping from me?” James asked his eyes suddenly going serious.

“Nothing, I’ve had a few nightmares I guess you must have just been in a deep sleep.”

James shook his head. “No, what’s going on, Harry?”

Harry sighed. “Okay, but don’t be mad. I had Uncle Sirius put a silencing charm on my room.”

“What? Why?”

“Because you’ve been too worried about me. I know that you haven’t been sleeping much and my dreams aren’t anything new. They’re just repetitive of what happened in the graveyard. This way I thought that everyone would just sleep normal.”

James sighed and then he pulled Harry close for a hug. “Alright, I forgive you. And I’ll let you keep your silencing charm, though I will be having a word with Sirius later. However, you have to promise me that you will come and get me if the dreams are really bad, alright?”

Harry nodded. “I promise, Da.”

James grinned. “Good.”

“So what’s the second thing that you need to talk to me about?”

James nodded. “Second is your animagi. I know that you’re getting

frustrated because you haven't managed to get anything of the wolf yet but you will. Last night only proved that point to me. When you were working on trying to change your arm your eyes were closed when you were lost in concentration and this ... this power came from you."

"Power?" Harry asked, his curiosity peaked. "What kind of power?"

James smiled. "A good power. It was shimmering around you in this whitish-blue light. Sirius wasn't in the room at the time; it was when he had gone downstairs to get us some drinks. I didn't mention it last night because I needed time to think about it." He was quiet for a moment before speaking again. "I spoke to Dumbledore about it last night as well."

Harry looked a bit concerned now. "Dumbledore? Da, what's going on?"

James sighed. "It's a long story, Harry; alright ... I'm going to start from the beginning. But first I need you to promise that you won't tell anyone about this other than Ron, Hermione, and Ginny. Sirius and Remus only know half of it."

Harry nodded. "Okay, I promise."

"You do know the story of the four founders of Hogwarts right?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah."

James nodded. "After I turned fifteen my Da sat me down and told me this story as well. It gets passed down to every generation as soon as a sign of the power shows; which is usually around fifteen years old. So I guess now it's my turn to tell the story to you."

"What kind of story? Is it about the four founders?"

James nodded. "Part of it, well centuries before the story of the four founders even starts, actually. It has been passed down in my family for centuries but it has gotten to the point where we don't know how much is fact and how much is myth. Okay, so during the time of the

Druids and the Celts living in Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Britain, there were many gods and goddesses that they believed roamed the earth. Unlike the Greek gods, they did not picture them strictly in human form, though some of them may have been. These gods and goddesses tended to be part human and part animal. For example, some of them may have been in the form of a man, but bear antlers or horns. Each god or goddess represented a certain thing. The Greek god Zeus was the sky god; the Roman god Mars was the god of war and so on. It was the same idea here.”

Harry nodded in understanding. “But they were viewed differently?”

“Exactly,” James replied. “Well, it is said, that a Scottish goddess by the name of Corra appeared outside of the home of the Potter family in Scotland. Corra took upon the form of the crane. Now the symbol of the crane is said to have the knowledge to transcend messages to the otherworld or to the underworld. So Corra appeared and changed back into human form. She was a beautiful goddess, the goddess of prophecy. She told the Potters a prophecy. The prophecy stated that the Potter family would become powerful and strong and that hundreds of years later that power would grow stronger and continue to be vital to the magical world. Now, the Potters at the time had absolutely no idea what to make of this. They liked the idea that one day they would be strong and powerful, but they were already powerful and strong. The Potters were the chieftains of the village and they had lots of animals and food. What more could they ask for? But they heard the prophecy and accepted that something good was going to happen to them or their family generations later. But something good never comes without a price.”

“So this goddess of prophecy just appeared in the form of a crane and told them they would be powerful one day?” Harry asked. “I’m not sure where this is going.”

James nodded. “Don’t worry; it’s a really long story. But you will understand it. Now, the Potters continued to live their lives normally and eventually the elder Potter died and his oldest son took over and so on and so on. This went on for five generations, but still nothing ever happened to relate back to Corra’s prophecy. The Potters continued to pass down the story but nothing happened. Then one

day, an elderly woman appeared at their door. She had traveled on foot from a neighbouring village and she was looking for food and water. Never ones to turn down a guest, they let her in. The woman was so happy to be accepted and cared for that she revealed her true identity, Dia Greine, the Celtic sun goddess or the daughter of the sun god himself. She granted them one wish. Now, the eldest Potter at this time was greedy and he wanted to be powerful and strong, much more powerful and stronger than he already was. He wished for Corra's prophecy to come true. Dia Greine granted him his wish and that's when trouble befell them all. The eldest Potter got his wish, he became powerful and strong like Corra had predicted but he did so on the expense of the people that he was supposed to protect. The villagers became angry and in the dead of night, they snuck into the Potter house and murdered them in their beds. Only the youngest son managed to escape. He was sixteen years old and he was called Brone. He ran from the village and found himself somewhere else to hide. But it was there that he met Blodeuwedd, the goddess of flowers or the western isles of paradise. She was known as the white flower or the Lily maid of the Celtic initiation ceremonies."

"Lily maid?"

"Yes. Her symbol was that of the lily as well. She was beautiful and she seduced him. But she was betrothed to another god Lleu, someone that she didn't love. She had been created by Gwyddion and Math from the flowers of oak, broom, and meadowsweet. Gwyddion wanted her to marry his nephew, Lleu. Gwyddion and Math had been planning on Blodeuwedd marrying Lleu since she was created. Blodeuwedd had the power of flowers, wisdom, initiations, and lunar mysteries. She was an earth goddess and she was powerful. But Blodeuwedd did not want to marry Lleu so she set out to avoid it. She seduced the young Potter one afternoon in the woods. He had become enchanted by her beauty. But her seduction went against her when she became pregnant with his child. Blodeuwedd was not pleased and soon she had other problems. She fell in love with a young god who she met in the woods named Gronw and they knew that they could only be together if Lleu was out of the picture. They tricked Lleu and Gronw killed him. Gronw was furious when he finally managed to return to his beloved and found her pregnant with a common wizard's child, a mere mortal. He wanted her gone from

his life. She gave birth to the child, a boy, and Brone left and took his son, escaping from the goddess. She was changed into an owl for her adulterous crime as well as for plotting in the death of Lleu by Gwyddion. He turned her into an owl, a carnivore, something that the other birds would shun and fear.”

“Wait, wait, wait, so our family has the blood of a goddess in it?” Harry asked in awe. “That’s huge! Does that make us really powerful or something?”

James grinned. “You’ll find out, just listen. So Brone moved to the other side of Scotland to raise his son who he called Maponos meaning ‘divine son’. But Blodeuwedd followed him in her owl form. She had nothing left now, but she was an owl, yet still the earth goddess. Blodeuwedd watched from a distance as her son was raised. When he was about two years old, the father married a witch who was more than willing to become a mother to the boy. But as the boy got older it was shown that he possessed powers much larger than a normal wizard. He had powers that the earth goddess possessed.”

“He had the powers of a goddess?”

James nodded. “Yes, he did. Now remember, Blodeuwedd’s powers had much to do with flowers, wisdom, initiations, and lunar mysteries, well, the young boy inherited all of them. Now the one thing that was different between a wizard and a god was magic. Not all of the gods could do magic. They had power, yes, power to control certain things but not all of them could do magic. Now combined with magic, the power of the earth goddess was very strong. So strong in fact, that Maponos soon learned how to control two vital elements, earth and air. By being able to control the element of air, he had power over the wind, the breeze, and the weather. When it stormed he could control the weather. One thing that he noticed particular was that when he got angry lightning might strike, which was similar to Zeus in Greek mythology, or when he was sad it might rain. But if he called upon the element of air his powers would increase. Now earth was his second element and earth was much stronger because after all, his mother had been an earth goddess. With the power of the earth element he could heal and could control the flowers and the earth. The power

was raw and strong.”

“Da, what exactly do you mean by control the air and control the earth?” Harry asked. “I mean, so he could control those things? What good did it do exactly?”

“See that’s where it’s interesting, by having that control he could call upon those elements for help.” James explained. “When he needed help with anything all he had to do was call upon the elements to help him out and they would come. Another thing he could do was physically make a form of an element and name them. Then he would only have to call them by name and they would come to help him out. The forms of the elements depended on the element itself. The earth elements would appear as any type of earth animal such as dogs, wolves, lions, bears, bulls, deer, bison, stags, mice, and so on. Air contained animals of the air such as owls, eagles, ravens, and other birds. He could also become multiple animagi because of this power.”

“So I’m not the only Potter to have more than one form?” Harry asked. “But you had said that you never knew of anyone to have more than one form?”

James shrugged. “No I don’t know of anyone else, except now for you and Dumbledore. This story has been passed down in the Potter family for centuries but I didn’t think about it then, I’ve always thought of it as a story or a background to my power and nothing else.”

Harry nodded. “So, now that he had this great power what happened?”

“Well, I’ll tell you.” James replied. “He used it to help others. He became a healer and he could heal people with the help of his elementals. The elements of air and earth could help him heal arms, blood, bones, the chest, the feet, the hands, legs, lungs, nose, skin, teeth, and throat. Maponos was vital to the village because of this power. Then he fell in love. He met a beautiful witch named Bricia Ravenclaw who was a descendent of the god of the waters of Luxovium.

“Wait, Ravenclaw? We’re related to one of the four founders?” Harry

asked in shock. "That's ... that's brilliant!"

James grinned. "It is brilliant, yes, but remember that this all happened before the story of the four founders. They gave birth to twins, a boy who they named Lugus meaning oath and a girl named Cinnia meaning beauty. The twins inherited these powers as well as the powers of magic and the power grew in the Potter family. They now possessed the powers of the elements of earth, air, and water. Water is an interesting element because it can be obtained from a puddle, an ocean, a lake, or from the air. Water energy is also very powerful when it comes to dreams, reflections, psychic abilities, prophecy, and divination. This powerful element mixed in with the powerful elements of earth and air only added to the power that the Potter family possessed. Now Cinnia and Lugus decided to follow in their father's footsteps and they used their powers for good such as healing. Now with the added power of the water element they could also heal the ears, eyes, stomach, and the uterus. The element of water also gave them more physical elemental animal forms such as dolphins, fish, whales, serpents, or any other creature of the sea."

James stood up now and wandered around his son's room as he continued the story. "Generations passed and the Potters kept their powers to themselves, keeping it a secret. No one needed to know that they were as powerful as they were. It was a time when muggles believed in magic and were not afraid of those who were different but only to some extent. If they knew of the huge power that the Potters possessed they would have tried to kill them in fear. Well, as time went on, the power of the goddess and the power of the elements only increased and melded with the magical power in every child who was born. The Potters moved around a bit but always seemed to end up back in Scotland. There was an Egyptian princess somewhere in the family as well as the daughter of an English lord. Then around one thousand C.E. the four founders of Hogwarts created Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry because of the fear that the muggles would end the magical race. You know what happened then, about the fallout between Gryffindor and Slytherin. But I'm sure you weren't aware of the love affair between two of the founders."

"Huh?"



James laughed. “‘Huh’, about sums it up. You see, Rowena Ravenclaw and Godric Gryffindor had a daughter together named Alexandra Gryffindor. She fled to Godric’s Hollow with her mother and father after the fallout between the founders and there they lived in the small cottage house that we lived in while hiding from Voldemort.”

“I didn’t know that Gryffindor and Ravenclaw were married.” Harry replied. “You think something like that might have come up at school once.”

James nodded. “They weren’t married, they just had an affair. Alexandra was their pride and joy and they loved her. But one thing that a lot of people don’t know is that Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor were the best of friends. The fallout that happened between them was terrible because both of them felt that the other had betrayed them. Helga Hufflepuff tried to be peacemaker between the two of them, but even Rowena could not get Godric to stop the fight, so they split up. But Hogwarts stayed where it was. Alexandra grew up in Godric’s Hollow with her parents. When she was sixteen years old they began to look for a suitable husband for her. That’s when Slytherin appeared. His son was only a few years older than Alexandra so he talked to Godric about a possible union between the two as a token of forgiveness. This way they could keep the power in the family.”

“Wait, Gryffindor and Slytherin were related?” Harry asked.

James shook his head. “No, this was what Gryffindor and Slytherin wanted but Alexandra had other plans. She had been out in the forest, riding her horse, without her father knowing of course, as at that time this was an improper way for a woman to behave; anyway she stumbled upon a wolf in the forest who was hurt. She had always been taught to help and her heart ached at the poor wolf. She jumped down from her horse and called upon her own personal element of fire. The element of fire is one of the most powerful elements there is. It’s all of those out of control, wild emotions and powers such as anger, lust, love, sex, passion, and light. With the element of fire, the animals that can be formed are dragons, snakes, lizards, and phoenixes. Fire can heal the abdomen, the heart, genitalia, and the

mind. Alexandria used her element of fire to save the wolf, who was cut open in the abdomen. The wolf was healed and after he healed he turned into a man. The man was Grant Potter and he fell to his knees kissing Alexandria's hands in thanks as he recognized a powerful witch like himself and he knew that not all power was used for good yet she had taken the time to help him. And when he looked up into her beautiful grey eyes he fell in love. He introduced himself, but his introduction was stopped by a kiss. It is claimed that they fell in love at first sight. They made love that afternoon in the forest and pledged their love to one another. Godric was furious when his daughter returned with Grant and told her father that they were to be wed. Godric and Salazar had agreed on the marriage idea of uniting their families. Slytherin was not pleased either and they again broke apart, never to speak again. Alexandria and Grant married. They had a boy who they named Kerr meaning 'man of strength' because he now had the power of the earth goddess as well as the power of all four elements."

Harry was staring at his father now, unsure of what to say. It was a remarkable story but how much of it was myth and how much fact. "So, we have the power of all four elements, is that what you're trying to say?"

James nodded. "Basically yes, but that's not all. There's something else, something that has remained a secret for centuries. Murray Potter, a young man from a few generations later fell in love with a beautiful woman with golden hair but she was forbidden to him. Murray did not know this and he pursued her. Her name was Zaira meaning 'princess' and she was the daughter of Merlin."

"As in Arthur's Merlin? As in, Merlin?" Harry asked, his eyes widening in shock.

"As in Arthur's Merlin. Merlin had a daughter with Niniane and when she tried to trick him to get his powers; he bestowed all of his power upon his daughter. Zaira knew this and when Merlin disappeared she ran from her mother because Zaira had fallen in love with Murray in turn and they married. Their son, whom they named Arthur after King Arthur himself, was a very powerful wizard in turn. He had the power of the earth goddess, all four elements, his own magical power, as

well as the genius of Merlin.” James explained. “By the time that the fifteenth century hit and the muggles went through the Renaissance, magic was completely hidden from the muggle world and the power that the Potters possessed was thought to be a myth.”

Harry gulped. “Is it?”

“Is it a myth? I don’t know. I’ve always been an extremely powerful wizard, Harry. I can control the elements and I taught you how to do so when you were only five years old.”

“Elemental magic? But you said that all witches and wizards could do that and that most just didn’t bother to teach it anymore.” Harry replied.

James nodded. “That is true. But basic elemental magic is things like making a fire in the hearth, turning on lights, summoning things. All stuff that you can do, but controlling the elements itself is something a lot different. Something that you’ve managed to do from time to time without your knowledge. Something that I never realized that I could do until my da sat me down and told me the story as well.”

“Like what?” Harry asked.

James sighed. “You learn quickly when you put your mind to it. I bet that you could do any spell you wanted without your wand. You don’t think about it because the wand is always there, but you can do it. I could at your age and I know that you’re a lot more powerful than I was at fifteen. Look at how quickly you picked up on the animagi transformation. In case you never noticed, Harry, you haven’t been using a wand to learn how to change. Most witches and wizards do need that. You can become four animals, though you have only mastered two of them. The owl is an air element, the phoenix one of fire, the wolf and the lion are one of earth. What does that tell you?”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know.”

James smiled. “Yes you do. It tells you that water is your weakest element, but you can still control it and that earth is your strongest element. You have power Harry, more power than me, more power

then even Dumbledore himself. That whitish-blue light that was radiating from you when you were trying to change into a wolf, that is your power. When I saw that light it showed me that you have reached the maturity level of the power. It usually appears in the witch or wizard around fifteen. Yours is starting to arise now, stronger than ever."

"So what does that mean? What am I supposed to do with this power? I don't understand what you're trying to tell me."

"I'm saying that you are going to be an extremely powerful wizard, Harry, and you already are now. You have the blood of the earth goddess Blodeuwedd, Rowena Ravenclaw, Godric Gryffindor and Merlin himself running through your veins. And Dumbledore told you that when Voldemort tried to kill you as a baby he transferred some of his powers to you and he is the heir to Slytherin. Adding Slytherin's power to what you already have only makes you stronger." James explained. "Which means that you will be powerful as long as you learn how to harness that power. I'm going to help you do that. It's very important that you learn how to control your power, especially now with Voldemort back in his own body."

Harry nodded as he stared at his father. Everything that he had just learnt seemed too unbelievable but at the same time he knew that his father wasn't lying. "You think that I'm going to come up against Voldemort again?"

"Do you?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. He wanted to kill me when I was a baby for no reason and he failed. He's not going to let that go."

James thought briefly of the prophecy that Trelawney had made before they had went into hiding. Harry deserved to know and he knew that, but he couldn't bring himself to tell him. He was only fifteen years old. He closed his eyes, telling himself that it didn't matter if he waited a little longer. "He still wants to kill you."

"I know. I won't let him, Da. I'll kill him first if I have too."

James nodded. "You're more powerful than him. You just have to learn how to harness it all. Then you won't have to worry about Voldemort so much."

Harry nodded. "Good. So when do I start these lessons?"

"I figure we'll work on them once a day with your animagi lessons. Is that alright?"

"Sure, I can handle it."

James smiled as he looked down at his son with pride. "Yeah, you can handle anything."

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## **Chapter 28: Yes ... er ... No**

**Author's Notes:** please review!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XXVIII – Yes ... er ... No**

After James left Harry alone in his room that morning, he sat there stunned at what he had just learned. He knew that his father wasn't lying and to him that seemed to make it even harder to take it all in. He showered and dressed for the day before heading downstairs for breakfast. He ate quietly, though he did laugh when James brought up the silencing charm to Sirius and Sirius gave him a dirty look before trying to explain his way out of that one. When he was finished, he went and sat in the living room with a book that he had found in the Potter library on elemental magic. He had only read the first chapter when Ginny, Hermione, and Ron came in.

"Good morning, Harry," they all said as they sat down.

Harry grinned up at them. "Hi, listen I need to talk to you guys. Let's go up to my room."

They nodded and followed him up. He closed the door behind him and then the four of them made themselves comfortable on his bed.

“Alright, I have three things to tell you guys. First of all, you’re not going to believe what Madam Bones is doing!”

Then he began his story. The reactions were pretty predictable. All three of them were angry.

“That’s ridiculous, Harry!” Hermione exclaimed. “She can’t kick you out of school because she thinks that you’re a liar! That’s the dumbest thing that I’ve ever heard!”

Ron nodded. “It won’t happen, mate. Dumbledore would never allow it!”

Ginny nodded. “No one will let her do it; everyone will stand up to her.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks guys, but to be honest, that’s the last thing on my mind at the moment. I just learnt something else this morning that I think is much more important. But first there’s something else that I have to tell you. I’ve kept a secret from you guys for a year now.” He waited for them all to look up at him in surprise before he continued. “I’m an animagi.”

He began to explain about asking his father if he could learn how. He explained about the potion and how he had seen four animals. He talked about how he could already become two and then he showed them. They were impressed. Ginny was in love with the phoenix form. She thought that he was beautiful with the red and gold feathers and the piercing green eyes. Hermione commented on how she had never seen a raven coloured owl before.

“How come you never told us that you were learning how?” Ron asked. “Maybe we would have liked to learn too.”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know, I guess I never thought of that. I just wanted to surprise you guys with what I had learnt. I also knew that

Hermione would bug me about doing it illegally.”

Hermione blushed. “Well, really, Harry, you should register.”

Harry grinned. “I already discussed it with McGonagall. Once I have all four forms down I’m going to register one of them.”

Ginny nodded. “That’s a good idea because then people will expect one form all the time and you can keep the other three as special forms for hiding or something.”

Harry nodded. “Exactly. Hey listen though, if you guys really want to learn how I can help you. It takes a long time. Da and Uncle Sirius were really impressed with how quickly I grasped it and it took me almost a year. It took them two years to do.”

Ginny grinned. “Would you really help us learn, Harry? Because I think that it would be fantastic to become an animagus.”

Hermione nodded. “It would be neat. I think that I would I like to learn too.”

“Yeah and me.” Ron replied.

Harry grinned. “Alright then, well, you can join in my lessons with me in the evenings for now and then when we go back to school I’ll help you from there.”

They all agreed and then Harry spoke up again.

“Okay, I have one more thing to tell you and this thing is huge, probably the biggest thing ever. I need you to promise that you won’t tell anyone else about it though.”

They all promised and then he began to explain the story of what his father had told him that morning. He watched as their eyes widened at what they had learned.

“Wow,” was the only word that Ron seemed to be able to speak when he finished.

"You just found all of this out this morning?" Ginny asked.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, it's crazy. But I know that it's true, you know?"

"So what does all this mean then, Harry?" Hermione asked.

Harry shrugged. "It means that I can be a really powerful wizard. Dad says that he will help me work out the power and all that jazz when I do my animagi lessons, we'll just extend them a bit longer. It should be some interesting stuff once I start learning it all."

Ginny grinned at him. "It's kind of exciting to think that you will have all this control over your magic and that you're related to an ancient Celtic goddess. Very neat if you ask me."

Harry grinned at her. "Yeah it is neat."

Hermione sighed before she spoke. "So James thinks that you're already more powerful than Voldemort himself?"

"I guess so or I have the potential to be. So that makes me feel better to know that I have the potential to not die at his hands."

Ginny grabbed Harry's hand and held tightly. "Don't say that! You're not going to die at his hands! That's not even something to joke about!"

Harry smiled down at her, admiring the way her chocolate brown eyes glowed in anger and worry as she looked up at him. "I'm sorry."

She smiled. "It's okay, just don't do it again."

He grinned and squeezed her hand tightly before letting go. "So I noticed that it wasn't raining out today, are you guys up for a game of Quidditch?"

They all agreed so they went to go find Fred and George. The twins were more than happy to join in a few games and to take a break from their inventing. Sirius and Remus decided to play as well and



Hermione opted to watch. They played for a few hours just enjoying the nice warm weather instead of rain. The summer had been filled with a lot of rain so far and they hadn't managed to squeeze in too many games of Quidditch yet. They went in for lunch before returning outside. Sirius and Remus went back to research mode. Fred and George decided to go in to work on some more inventions and Ron somehow managed to convince Hermione to go on a broom as long as he went on with her. Harry found himself alone with Ginny. They moved over to go sit in the garden as they watched Ron slowly go in low circles around the pitch before moving just a little higher up with Hermione holding on for dear life.

"I don't understand how she can't like flying," Harry replied as he glanced up at his two friends. "I remember when we took Buckbeak up to get Sirius and she was holding me so tightly that I think I had a bruise."

Ginny laughed. "I guess it's not for everyone. I love it. It's one of my favourite past times. There's no other feeling like it then to be up in the air, flying around in the wind. It's always the best way to cheer me up too when I'm sad or something."

Harry nodded. "Yeah me too."

They were quiet for a few minutes as they watched Ron and Hermione in the distance or Ginny watched them and Harry watched Ginny. Her hair was pulled back again in a long braid. He liked it down best, down and wild because he wanted his hands in it. She was so beautiful that she sometimes just took his breath away. He shook the thoughts from his mind. He wasn't supposed to think about that. She was his best mate's sister. She was his friend. She was with Michael. *The git*. He cursed himself. He didn't have a problem with Michael Corner, he even liked him. Or he had.

He sighed. He had to stop thinking about her. His thoughts had drifted to Ginny constantly the entire summer and it was starting to annoy him. He didn't know what to do about it because he didn't want to ruin their friendship or be the cause of a break-up with Michael. He sighed and asked the next question quickly because the git was on his mind.

“So Gin, have you heard from Corner lately?”

Ginny nodded, turning back to Harry. She almost sighed out loud when he dragged his fingers through his hair. She loved when he did that though she had absolutely no idea why except that she thought it was sexy, but she managed to prevent herself from sighing and remember that Michael was her boyfriend. “Yeah, I heard from him two days ago. He’s doing alright. Said he’s been having a fun summer and that he’s going on vacation to France with his parents. He sounds a bit funny in his letters though, like maybe something’s wrong. I don’t know, I’m probably just imagining it. I’m sure he’s having a great vacation in France.”

“Oh, that’s nice. France is a nice country.”

“Have you been there?” Ginny asked.

Harry shook his head. “No, but I’ve heard nice things about it. Da says that we have a house in France but we’ve never been there.”

“I see. Well, I think that it would be a nice place to go, at least one day, anyway.” Ginny replied. “I’d like to see the world.”

He grinned. “I’m sure it’s a great place.”

She laughed. “Better then great! I’m sure it’s amazing! I’ve always wanted to travel the world.”

“Me too. I plan to one day in the future, when school’s done and Voldemort’s gone.” Harry explained.

Ginny nodded. “I think that it would be fun and that sounds like a good plan to me.”

Harry grinned. “So, if you could pick five places in the world to see what would they be?”

Ginny smiled over at him as she stretched out on the grass. Harry tried to ignore the fact that her breasts were now pressed tightly

against the tank top she wore and that her legs were showing a lot more since her shorts had ridden up a bit. He licked his lips as he looked down at her staring at her soft lips. But Ginny didn't notice as she had her eyes closed. When she spoke, Harry caught himself and turned his attention to her face. Not that it helped much as he now found himself drowning in those chocolate brown eyes.

"I'd like to go to ... well, I want to see the falls in Canada, the ancient part of Greece, the Colosseum in Italy, enjoy Aruba, and I think maybe Russia, especially the royal palace. Where would you go?"

Harry cleared his throat as images of just laying his own body over hers and capturing that mouth under his filled his mind. "Uh ... places I'd like to go, well, let's see ... um, Greece would be nice, Italy yeah, I'd like to see Canada, maybe Hawaii, and China."

Ginny smiled at him and his stomach only knotted more as the blood drained out his head and went straight to his loins. He tried to focus on something else but it wasn't helping. She just looked so darn cute sitting there grinning at him.

"I want to go everywhere in the world. To only choose five places is much too difficult. I'd also like to take a better tour of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland — oh, I want to go everywhere! I mean just because we live and travel here and there doesn't mean that we've seen everything."

Harry nodded. "Good point." He glanced out towards the pitch when he heard a shriek and grinned. "Guess that was too high and too fast."

Ginny laughed as they watched Ron go a little lower and continue to fly around slowly as Hermione held on for dear life. "Oh, Hermione cracks me up sometimes."

Harry grinned. "She should like flying, it's so great."

She nodded. "Definitely. It's the greatest thing to do in the world."

Harry grinned at her playfully. "The greatest, eh? Are you sure about

that?"

She laughed. "Yes." Then she shrieked when Harry dived at her, tickling her ribs.

"Are you sure?" He asked again.

She laughed as he tickled her almost everywhere he could reach and she tickled him back. They rolled across the grass tickling each other and laughing like loons. Harry pushed her back down onto her back, continuing to tickle her ribs.

"Say 'uncle'," he replied, his breathing heavy from laughter.

"Uncle!" Ginny cried out as Harry's hands stopped and she looked up at him, a smile on her face.

Harry grinned down at her, laughter in his throat. His hands rested on either side of her head as he held his body above hers. The smile faded from his eyes as he looked down at her. Her cheeks were flushed from laughing and her soft lips were slightly parted. His eyes met hers, those chocolate brown eyes that twinkled up at him. His gaze dropped back down to her mouth. He could feel her heart beating against his chest as she breathed deeply. She was so beautiful. He knew he should move now, roll over and sit up, call a game over, but he couldn't bring himself to do so not without a taste. He dropped his face lower and gently brought his lips to hers.

Explosions went off in his brain. She tasted sweet and spicy. She smelt like strawberries and spring and her lips felt like heaven. He nibbled gently, only grinning to himself when she kissed him back. He had never felt so much in a kiss before. Hannah had been sweet but friendly and Cho had been ... well, nothing. Parvati had been strictly platonic. But Ginny ... she was everything he had been dreaming of and more. He pulled back to look down into her eyes.

Her chocolate brown eyes fluttered open gently and she met his gaze. Neither of them said anything and then he leaned down and took her mouth again, this time deepening the kiss. Her lips parted gently to allow for his tongue and he groaned, dragging his hand through the

braid and making her hair come free and into his hands.

Ginny moaned under his mouth. This was what she had been waiting for; this fire, this need, and his incredible mouth on hers. He tasted amazing and exactly the way that she had imagined he would; strong, sexy, dangerous, and surprisingly sweet. Her body arched under his as she met his tongue with her own, nibbling at his mouth as she kissed him. Michael had never made her feel like this before. She felt like her entire body was on fire and she loved every second of it. She threw her arms around his neck and dragged her fingers through his thick black hair as she changed the angle of the kiss. This was Harry she was kissing. Harry, her good friend, not her boyfriend.

She pulled back quickly as that thought rushed through her brain. He wasn't Michael. Michael was her boyfriend. You weren't supposed to kiss other guys when you were dating someone. Guilt swam through her system as she chewed her bottom lip softly. "Harry, wait," she murmured, placing a hand on his chest to push him away.

He sat up, dragging his fingers through his hair. "Alright, why?"

Ginny sat up as well, kneeling in front of him. "Harry, I ... oh hell," she murmured before dragging his mouth back down to hers. She fell on top of him as he fell back to the ground.

The kiss went on longer this time and deeper. Both of Harry's hands were now tangled in her hair as he framed her face. Her lips met his over and over and an aching need and want pitted itself in her stomach. That tingly feeling that she had experienced when his arms had come around her waist to catch her fall had returned but this time it was stronger. But she had a boyfriend, she remembered again. She pulled back.

"Harry, wait."

He groaned and sat up. "Ginny."

"Harry," she whispered. "When did you start feeling this way towards me? How did this happen?"

He shrugged. "I don't know, I realized it towards the beginning of the summer. I want to kiss you again is that alright?"

"Yes," his gaze fell to her lips again and Ginny shook her head. "No! Wait, Harry, I'm dating Michael."

"I know. Damn," he dragged his fingers through his hair again. "Do you want to date Michael or me?"

Ginny stared at Harry in surprise. Her heart was still pounding in her chest and she could still taste him on her lips. She knew exactly what she wanted. "I –"

"Ginny!" Molly called out as she made her way into the garden. "Where are you? Ginny, I need you to come inside with me and help me out with a few things will you?"

Ginny silently cursed her mother's timing. "Sure Mum, I'm coming." She stood up and gave Harry a small smile before following her mother into the house.

Harry watched her go, his heart pounding and his brain screaming. *Why had he done that? After everything that he had told himself about not wanting to ruin their friendship or ruin her relationship with Michael and now here he was making her choose! What had he been thinking? He hadn't been thinking,* he thought. He closed his eyes and brought back the taste of her, he could still taste her. He had done that because he wanted her and because he fancied her.

He left Ron and Hermione alone to continue flying and instead went into the manor and upstairs to find Sirius and Remus. He was surprised to find James in there too.

"Hi Da, I didn't know you were home."

James nodded. "I just got here, about five minutes ago. What's up?"

Harry plopped himself down in an armchair and buried his face in his hands. "I just kissed Ginny."

“What?” Sirius asked, plopping himself in the chair next to Harry.  
“When did this happen?”

Remus nodded, turning around to face Harry. “How did this happen?”

James sat down on the other side of Harry. “How long has this been waiting to happen?”

Harry grinned. “I don’t know. She’s my friend, one of my really good friends. I mean, I don’t think that she’s my best friend but she’s definitely on her way of getting there. I just ... this summer when she came I started getting these feelings for her and ... well I’ve tried to keep them to myself but –”

“Wow, wait,” Sirius replied. “Why did you try to keep them to yourself?”

“Because I don’t want to ruin our friendship and because she has a boyfriend and because she’s my best mate’s little sister.”

James grinned. “Well, didn’t Ginny have a crush on you at one time?”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Da that was four years ago! That hardly counts.”

Remus grinned. “So what happened? When you kissed her?”

Harry shrugged. “Well, we were playing Quidditch and then everyone went inside. Ron convinced Hermione to fly on his broom with her. She hates flying. So he promised to go real slow and only move higher when she said it was alright. So Ginny and I went and sat in the garden to watch. We were just talking and then I don’t remember exactly how it started but we had a tickle war. You know, just rolling around on the grass tickling each other and laughing. And then she said uncle and I was lying over her and just staring at her. I kept telling myself to move, that I shouldn’t even be thinking about what I was thinking. She’s my best mate’s little sister. But I couldn’t stop thinking about her. Then I just leaned down and I kissed her.”

“What did she do?” Sirius asked.

“She kissed me back. After a little while I pulled back and just stared at her and then I kissed her again. I don’t know how long we kissed but then she pushed me away and said wait. So we sat up and just looked at each other for a few minutes. She started to say something then she just grabbed me and kissed me again.”

“Whoo whoo!” Sirius replied with a grin. “I knew the girl had it in her, she’s feisty! I told Gorgeous years ago that Potters had a thing for redheads and that it would only be a matter of time!”

“A thing for redheads?” Remus asked with a grin. “Very true.”

James grinned and ignored his friends. “So then what happened?”

Harry shrugged. “Well, then she pulled away again and asked me where this was coming from and when I had started to like her that way. So I told her and then I asked her if I could kiss her again. She said yes and then changed it to no and then said that she was dating Michael.”

“Ooh, ouch,” Remus said.

“Exactly. So then I asked her who she would rather be dating me or Michael.”

“And what did she say?” Sirius asked.

“She stared at me and I could see it in her eyes that she wanted to kiss me again and then she was just about to say something when Molly came out and asked her to go in and help her with something. So she left.” Harry explained.

“Wow,” Remus replied. “Teenage drama.”

James laughed. “So you don’t actually know how she feels or anything then?”

Harry shook his head. “No idea. All I know is that she liked kissing me anyway.”



Sirius grinned. "Well, a bloke's got to start somewhere." He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "And this does explain your interesting dream this morning?"

Harry laughed. "What am I going to do? I don't want to ruin our friendship over this but I also really don't want her to be with Michael."

James shrugged. "Honestly, I don't think that there's much you can do."

"Thanks Da, great help."

Sirius grinned. "It's true, Harry; there isn't anything that you can do. You'll just have to wait for her to come around and you two can figure everything out."

"Uncle Remus?"

Remus sighed. "They're right, that's all you can do."

Harry groaned. "That's the worst advice ever. I hate it that you're right."

James laughed. "I know. Say, since you need to stay away from Ginny for a bit why don't we work on harnessing that power a bit?"

Harry nodded. "Alright, where do we start?"

James grinned. "Back at the beginning."

"Which means?"

Sirius grinned. "That you're going to go over everything that you were ever taught on elemental magic."

"Again?" Harry asked, thinking back to his memories of first learning it.

Remus nodded. "Again. So let's get started."

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## **Chapter 29: A Trial and an Answer**

**Author's Notes:** please reivew!! newly edited

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### **Chapter XXIX – A Trial and an Answer**

Harry could hardly concentrate on his lessons on elemental magic when his mind was too busy replaying that kiss over and over and over again in his mind. He couldn't count the number of times that James had yelled at him to pay attention while Sirius had only given him that knowing smile. He had spent the rest of the afternoon going over all of the basic elemental magic that he had learned when he was child. He had easily performed the magic since he had learnt it years ago but this time James wanted him to concentrate on the feeling of it. What it felt like to perform the magic without his wand. Harry remembered that feeling from when he was trying to do his animagi transformations. It was almost like a tingly feeling at the location where his concentration came from, except unlike the animagi transformations when he did simple spells he could feel the magic flowing throughout his entire body. It was like this light filled him up and he could sense this warm energy floating throughout his body. It was an incredible experience.

"You feel it, don't you?" James asked as he watched his son's eyes flicker with power that he understood as he remembered how he had felt the day that his Da had started teaching him.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I feel it."

The power radiated through him and Harry wondered how it was possible that he had never noticed this sensation or this power inside of him before. He could sense the heat of the magic vibrating through him, almost like a lick of untamed power that seemed to be coming from his heart, mind, body, and soul. His body was on fire and he could feel his own power flowing through his veins causing an almost

sexual punch to his system. He could understand it and he loved it.

James grinned. "Now you're getting somewhere. By repeating things you've already learned it comes easily, but now that you've reached the age when the power tends to come in you can sense it more. You have more control. Now I want you to try a more powerful spell, something that you've never done wandless before. How about a stunning spell? You mastered that pretty well for the third task?"

Harry nodded. He focused on his energy, on the feel of that powerful zing that rang through his blood and then he simply thought the word: *Stupefy!* A blast of red light came barrelling from his hand and shot at Sirius, sending him back against the wall, quite obviously stunned.

"Wow!"

James grinned. "Feels pretty incredible, eh? Come on, let's wake up Padfoot, and then we'll try something a bit harder. Once we get your wandless abilities down-pat I'll move onto helping you create your own elementals."

Harry could only nod as he watched his father snap his fingers and Sirius' eyes snapped open. He wondered how he had never really noticed before that even though James carried a wand with him at all times, he rarely used it. Or when he did have it out and pointed that the magic didn't always come from the wand. He shook the thoughts from his mind and instead continued to focus on the power within him. While James was making sure that Sirius was alright, Harry decided to give his wolf transformation another shot.

He pictured the image of the wolf clearly in his mind and then he began to work on changing his arm. He almost gasped in shock when he felt the tingly feeling come over his arm and when he looked down; he had a black fur paw where his arm had been.

"DA!"

James turned around and grinned. "See, you're getting there. Try your other arm now."

Harry tried to focus the other arm as well but nothing happened. He sighed and continued to work for about half an hour but with no success. Finally, James told him that they would get back to work with the elemental magic. Harry changed himself back and only nodded as they began to slowly review every charm, curse, and spell that Harry had ever learned and he tried to now learn how to do them wandless.

It was going to be a long night.

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As Harry was upstairs working on this new found ability, Ginny managed to escape from her mother and go up to her room. Molly had had Ginny helping her fold their laundry (*which she insisted on doing herself and was one of the only things that Maddy and Mickey allowed her to do*) and go back to the Burrow for a thorough cleaning (*because even though no one was living there the place needed to be cleaned, didn't it?*). Molly had chatted absently about anything and everything, something that Ginny normally enjoyed but today her focus was only on one thing: Harry James Potter.

He had kissed her! He had actually kissed her! And more than once! The kiss had been incredible, exactly like the kisses that she had always dreamed of, perfect and soft and smooth and a kiss that made her feel good and tingly inside. Michael had never kissed her like that before. Then he had asked her who she wanted to date, him or Michael? He was leaving the decision completely up to her. She knew that he was doing the right thing by doing so but damn it she wanted him to just take her and say that she didn't have to find a way to dump Michael gently.

She groaned and buried her face in the pillow. She heard a familiar scratching noise at the door so she jumped up to let Foolish in and then closed the door behind her. She snuggled with the dog on the bed.

"Oh Foolish, what am I going to do? I want Harry, I really do. He's handsome and sweet and sexy and smart and so nice. He's my friend. But then there's my boyfriend Michael and Michael is handsome and

sweet and smart too. How can I choose one over the other when I know that by doing so I'm going to hurt somebody?"

Foolish merely rolled over and wagged his tail, sticking his tongue out.

"That doesn't help me out in the least." Ginny replied.

She sighed and stayed snuggled next to the dog, until she drifted off to sleep.

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Harry had managed to avoid Ginny for the next week. They had talked of course and still hung out with Ron and Hermione, but Harry had avoided being alone with her since that day out in the garden. She still hadn't said anything to him yet and he wondered if maybe he shouldn't have left her with an ultimatum. After all, yes he did want her, but he also didn't want to lose his friendship with her. She was much too important for something like that. Besides, what if something happened and it didn't work out and then they couldn't even bear to be in the same room as each other.

No, bad thoughts, he cursed himself silently. That wasn't going to happen. He and Ginny would always be friends; he would make sure of it. A life without Ginny in it was just too much for him to bear. He was used to having her around and he wanted to have her around. He wanted to kiss her again. He wanted to hold her in his arms and just snog her senseless. He had other things to think about at the moment like that fact that he was going to a trial to see whether he would be kicked out of school in less than two hours. He shouldn't be thinking about Ginny.

He sighed as he climbed out of the shower and dried off before changing into his clothes. He brushed his teeth and then attempted to brush his hair, but as usual it stayed messy and continued to stick up in every which direction. He stepped out of the bathroom and froze when he saw Ginny snuggled with Foolish on his bed. She looked up when she heard the movement.

"Hi Harry," she said softly.

Harry smiled at her, shoving his hands in his pockets to prevent himself from grabbing her. A flash of that kiss rushed through his mind. "Hey."

She stood up and walked over to him. She looked beautiful. Her hair was pulled back in a long thick braid again. She wore a long white skirt and a black halter top. All he managed to do was sigh. "You've been avoiding me."

He nodded. "I know."

"Why?"

He sighed. "To give you space. To see what you decide. I want you, but I don't want to lose our friendship and if dating you will do that, then I don't want to."

Ginny smiled up at him before wrapping her arms around him and hugging him tight. "I feel the same way. I don't want to lose our friendship, Harry."

He wrapped his arms around her as well to hold her close. "So we're agreed on something then anyway."

Ginny pulled back a little to look up at him. "Will you kiss me again?"

He grinned. "Of course."

He leaned down to capture her mouth with his and –

"Harry, are you ready yet?" Sirius asked as he walked into the room. Harry and Ginny sprang apart quickly. Sirius only grinned and wiggled his eyebrows at them suggestively. "Well, well, well – lookie what I found."

Harry rolled his eyes. "You're gloating."

Sirius grinned. "Well, of course I am. I knew this was coming. Am I interrupting something?"

Ginny giggled as her face turned red and Harry only glared at his godfather. "You know you were."

"Ah well, it happens. We need you to come down now, Harry, we're leaving for the ministry."

Harry nodded and he watched as Sirius left the room before turning to Ginny. "Sorry about him."

Ginny smiled and threw her arms around his neck again. "It's alright. Harry, the trial is going to go great." She kissed him softly and when he looked down into her eyes she smiled. "And I do want to date you."

"What about Michael?"

"I'm going to have to find a nice way to break up with him now, won't I?" She reached up and kissed him softly. "Let's go."

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Harry sat in between his father, godfather, and honorary uncle with Dumbledore sitting a few feet away with Professor McGonagall. He was nervous no matter how much he tried to deny it. He trusted these four men with his life and not to mention the deep trust and respect that he carried for his head of house but he was worried. Madam Bones seemed determined to suspend him. He didn't understand why she was so determined to do so. During Sirius' trial he had been so sure that she would make such a better minister than Fudge had but she was quickly proving him wrong. He remembered how she had downright refused to believe him after the third task and how Fudge had been completely on her side. He wondered again why she was so determined not to believe that Voldemort was back.

He glanced up at where she was sitting in the front of the podium in the circular room. Her hair was pulled back into a bun and she wore glasses with a long chain that hung around her neck. Her eyes, the ones that normally looked friendly and soft were now hard and serious and Harry wasn't sure if he was imagining it or not, but he

thought he could see a strange whitish glint to them every once in a while. It reminded him strongly of what Viktor Krum's eyes had looked like before he had tried to attack Cedric in the maze. His thoughts were interrupted when the room was called to be silent and then he could only stare when a short portly man whom he didn't know walked up to the front.

"Good morning. We are here today for the trial of one Harry James Potter. We here at the Ministry of Magic believe that Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry will be much safer without Mr. Potter in attendance. We have reports that he is a liar and he is now insisting to the world that You-Know-Who has returned. Such a preposterous story is not good for the well-being of the students. We wish for him to be expelled."

Harry gulped. He didn't think that it was a good sign for the trial to start off that way. Dumbledore stood up next.

"My dear, Madam Bones, as I am the Headmaster of Hogwarts I'm sure that you're aware that only I am capable of suspending or expelling students." When she nodded, he continued on. "And since this is so I do not believe that Harry James Potter should be suspended or expelled. He has not done anything wrong."

"But he is insisting that He Who Must Not Be Named has returned and that is such a terrible lie!" Madam Bones insisted her eyes flashing in that eerie light again. "We cannot have him at the school! He must be expelled and his wand snapped immediately! He is delusional and it is a danger for him to be around other students!"

James jumped to his feet, his eyes turning smoky. "How dare you talk about my son that way? He has done nothing to warrant this attack!"

"James, sit down!" Dumbledore demanded, glaring at him. "Madam Bones, I'm going to ask you to reconsider. Mr. Potter has not done anything wrong. Voldemort has returned. I've told you and you did not believe me or you refused to believe me! He will go back to school."

Harry slumped a bit in his chair and Sirius elbowed him. "Sit up." Harry did so and looked up at the minister. Her eyes still had that



eerie glow to them and it again reminded him of Krum. But he had been under the Imperius Curse at the time. He looked up at the flash of blonde hair that had entered the room and when he realized that it was Lucius Malfoy an alarming thought crossed his mind. He glanced up at Sirius then.

“Uncle Sirius, look at the minister’s eyes, don’t you think that they look odd?”

Sirius glanced up at the front and nodded. “Yeah, they don’t look normal.” He elbowed Remus. “Moony, look at Bones’ eyes!”

Remus stared for a moment. “They look almost ... do you think she’s under the Imperius?” He elbowed James and pointed it out.

James nodded. “Yeah, that most certainly would explain a lot.” He elbowed Dumbledore and pointed it out. “Albus, do you think she’s under the Imperius?”

Percy Weasley came into the room then and Harry glared at him. He had still not tried to contact his family in any way and now here he was walking into Harry’s trial working as the minister’s assistant. He took a seat next to the minister and then made a point to not look at Harry or the Marauders. He also made a point of ignoring the Weasleys who were all in the room as well. This only increased Harry’s anger.

Dumbledore however was still whispering with James as he watched the minister closely. Finally he stood up and took out his wand. “Madam Bones, forgive me for this.” He muttered something and a jet of yellow light came flying out of his wand and hit Madam Bones square in the jaw. She shrieked and fell backwards.

“Dumbledore!” The portly man shrieked. “What have you done?”

Dumbledore held up his hand in a warning. “Help her up. If she remembers what this trial is about and if she still agrees with the statement then I apologize.” He hurried over to Madam Bones and helped her to her feet. By now the entire courtroom was standing. “Amelia, are you alright?”

Madam Bones looked up at Dumbledore carefully, her eyes flashing a normal colour. "I – I think I was under a curse."

Dumbledore sighed in relief. "Ahh, Amelia that does be still my heart! We need to speak, now!"

Madam Bones nodded and dismissed the court room completely, leaving no one but Dumbledore, the Weasleys, Harry, Hermione, McGonagall, and the Marauders. "Now, explain everything."

Dumbledore began the story by reviewing everything that had happened at the end of the third task and what Madam Bones had said and done herself. She only nodded as she listened. He then explained the purpose of the trial.

Madam Bones nodded. "I am terribly sorry for everything. Dumbledore, if you say that He Who Must Not Be Named is back then of course I believe you! You would never make up such a lie. Harry, I apologize for any trouble that I may have caused you but I seem to have lost my mind or something."

Harry nodded. "Madam Minister, I think that you might have been under the Imperius Curse. Your eyes looked the same as Viktor Krum's did in the maze right before he attacked Cedric Diggory and he was under the curse."

"But who would have done it?" She asked. "Everyone I work with I trust."

"Even Lucius Malfoy?" James asked; his voice still holding a glint of his anger.

Madam Bones turned to look at James in surprise. "Lucius is one of the most trusted wizards, are you implying something?"

"No, I am," Harry replied quietly. "Madam Bones, that night in the graveyard, Mr. Malfoy was one of the Death Eaters that appeared to worship Voldemort back. Maybe he put the curse on you."

Madam Bones was quiet for a few minutes. "How can you be sure?"

"We learnt through Severus Snape that Death Eaters are branded with a symbol on their left arm. A skull-like face with a snake running through it. I'd suggest that you check his arm." James replied.

Madam Bones nodded. "I will. Thank you, Lord Potter. I apologize again for any inconvenience. It looks like I will have to increase my security. Harry, of course you can go back to Hogwarts. Good day, everyone."

She turned and left the room, obviously still quite shaken over what had happened and Dumbledore turned to smile at them. "See, everything worked out. I'll see you when school starts, speaking of school. We were a little late giving the letters out this year, here are yours." He handed James a stack of letters with the Hogwarts seal. "Goodbye."

James turned to grin at Harry. "Well? Good eye, Harry!"

Harry grinned. "It's over; I really get to go back?"

James grinned. "You really get to go back. Here's your letter."

Harry's grin only widened. He opened the letter to see what he needed this year. He needed:

***The Standard Book of Spells Grade Five* by Miranda Goshawk**

***Defensive Theory* by Wilbert Slinkhard**

***The Dream Oracle* by Inigo Imago**

***Magical Hieroglyphs and Logograms* by George Lively**

"Only four new books."

Harry's attention was taken away from his book list by the squeal of delight that Hermione gave. "I'm a Prefect!" She exclaimed, jumping to her feet as she held the tiny badge in awe.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Big surprise!"

James grinned. "Congratulations Hermione."

Sirius nodded. "Yeah, good work to be a prefect. Only Moony managed that one."

Remus shrugged. "I was supposed to keep you guys in line – not that I did a good job of that, but I was supposed to."

Harry laughed and then his gaze landed on Ron who was staring into his envelope in shock. "Ron, what's up?"

Ginny walked over and pulled the envelope from her brother's hands. He didn't even move. She looked inside and gasped before yanking out the prefect badge. "No way!"

Fred and George grinned evilly. "Ickle Ronnikins is a prefect!"

"Who in their right mind would make Ron a prefect?" George asked with a look of pure bewilderment on his face.

Molly was busy chatting with Arthur about Percy but she turned at the sound of the chaos. "What's going on?"

Ron seemed to have found his voice by then because he looked up at his mum, his ears burning. "I'm a prefect, Mum."

"What's that, dear?"

Ginny shoved the badge into her mum's hand. "He's a prefect."

Molly squealed in delight and pulled her son into her arms. "Oh, this calls for a celebration! That's everyone in the family!"

Fred glanced at Molly in surprise. "What are George and I, next door neighbours?"

James and Harry laughed at this but no one else seemed to have heard as they were all too busy hugging and congratulating.

Harry looked up at his father. "Are you upset that I didn't make prefect

status?"

James shrugged. "Hell, I didn't so why would I expect you too?"

Harry only grinned. He felt better hearing his father say that as his first reaction had been guilt for not getting it and then anger that Ron did. But hearing his father say those words pushed those emotions away. "Thanks Da. Congrats Ron, Hermione."

Hermione grinned as she hugged Ron. "Oh, I'm so proud of you!"

Ron blushed and Harry grinned over at Ginny. The two of them were so obvious to everyone but each other.

Sirius clapped his hands together. "Well, let's head back to the manor so we can have a par-tay!"

They all agreed and began to exit the room. Ginny came up beside Harry and took his hand in hers. "I knew that you would get off."

He grinned at her. "Well, that might have had something to do with Bones being under the Imperius and all."

Ginny laughed before her expression became more serious. "Harry, we need to talk later about us, okay?"

He brought her hand to his lips and smiled. "Okay."

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The party went on for hours and by the time that Ginny managed to escape she was exhausted. She just wanted a few minutes alone with Harry to discuss their relationship. She had agreed to date him but she still had to figure out the Michael problem. She liked Michael. He was handsome and sweet and smart. She didn't want to hurt him. Guilt edged its way into her system when she recognized Michael's owl at the window. She let him inside and opened the letter. Her eyes widened as she read what was written:

**Dear Ginny,**

France is brilliant! I am really enjoying my time here. I've been to all of the major tourist sites like the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower. Not to mention the fact that my mum has been dragging my dad and I to every possible store in sight. The woman likes to shop.

It's a beautiful country and I'm so glad that we decided to come. The weather is beautiful and sunny. The beaches of Normandy are incredible! Dad and I went through this tour thing for muggles and did you know that in the 1940s there was a huge battle on those beaches between muggles – something about a second world war – crazy! I've been catching up on the weather in Britain and let me tell you, all that rain – I'd much rather be here basking in the sun.

But I can't lie to you anymore. This letter has a strict purpose.

Listen Ginny, I didn't want to do this in a letter but I felt much too guilty to wait until school started so I hope that you can forgive me. But I met this girl here. Her name is Dominique St. Clair and she's a student at Beauxbatons. Her parents are moving to Britain and she will be attending Hogwarts this year. I think I'm in love with her. She's beautiful and she's smart and she's a lot of fun to be with. I'm sorry, but ... well, would you hate me terribly if I asked you if we could just be friends?

Sincerely,  
Michael

**P.S. I hope that you're having a great summer!**

Ginny read and re-read the letter five times before it fully sunk in. Michael had met another girl and he was dumping her. He was breaking up with her in a letter. He was leaving her for another girl. What a stupid inconsiderate ... why he was amazing! She quickly pulled out some parchment, her quill flying across the page quickly.

*Dear Michael,*

*You have no idea how relieved I was to hear about Dominique. No, of*

*course I don't hate you and I would love to be friends. I met someone else this summer too ... or, well I didn't meet him but ... something happened. I've been feeling incredibly guilty all summer too and trying to figure out a way to break up with you. We were good together but if we met other people that quickly I guess this only proves that we make better friends then we do boyfriend and girlfriend. Dominique sounds like a great girl and I can't wait to meet her! I'm glad that you think that you're falling in love with her. That's a big step.*

*France does sound brilliant! I've always wanted to go there. Harry and I were just talking a few days ago about all of the countries in the world that we'd like to see. France was definitely one of them. We have had some bad weather here lately, but it's gotten better. I'll see you at school and I'm very happy for you.*

*Your Friend,  
Ginny*

*P.S. I'm glad that you're having a great summer!*

She folded up the parchment and sent it off with his owl before she took out his letter to read it again. She only grinned to herself happily before she hurried out her room to find Harry. She was halfway down the stairs when she heard his voice from behind her. She turned and jumped into his arms shocking Ron who happened to be standing next to him.

"GINNY!" Ron exclaimed. "WHAT ARE YOU –"

But Ron trailed off in shock as Harry's mouth met Ginny's for a long, deep, kiss. "Hello," Harry murmured when they broke apart.

Ginny grinned. "Hi."

"But – but – what? Why? When? How? Harry and – THAT'S MY SISTER!" Ron exploded.

Harry turned to look at Ron. "She is, yes. Do you happen to have a problem with the fact that I'm going to be her boyfriend?"

Ron was silent for a few minutes as his eyes darted back and forth between them and then he glared at Harry. "If you hurt her, I'll kill you."

Harry grinned. "Seems fair!"

Then he turned and kissed Ginny again.

"Oy! And stop snogging!"

They ignored him and continued to kiss softly. When they broke apart, Ginny handed Harry the letter from Michael. "Read this. I just wrote him back."

Harry glanced down at the letter and he read his grin widened. "What luck!"

Ginny laughed. "I know! I wrote him back telling him that the same thing happened to me and that I was trying to figure out a way to break it off easily with him."

"Wait, wait, wait!" Ron exclaimed. "Break it off with whom?"

"Michael Corner," Harry supplied. "You know, the guy that she's been dating since the Yule Ball."

"WHAT?" Ron exploded.

Ginny giggled as she stood next to Harry. "We're not dating anymore, Ron. Now I'm with Harry."

Ron only continued to stare them at in shock and then he grinned evilly. "Wait until Fred and George hear about this!"

Ginny only groaned and buried her face into Harry's chest. They watched Ron head downstairs and then Ginny turned to Harry and smiled up at him. "Well, don't you have something that you'd like to ask me?"



Harry glanced down at her quizzically and then his grin flashed. “Gin, will you be my girlfriend?”

She grinned and kissed him softly. “Yes.”

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## Chapter 30: Tricks

**Author's Notes:** Please review!! and thanks to peskypetunia for some ideas!! newly edited

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## Chapter XXX – Tricks

Harry and Ginny headed downstairs together walking hand in hand. Both were a little nervous to see how everyone else would react to them being together. Ron's reaction had actually been the most feared but he had taken it all quite well and in a very Ron manner if they did say so themselves. Harry kept glancing quickly at Ginny from the corner of his eye; he still couldn't believe that she had actually agreed to be his girlfriend. It was a good feeling to know that she liked him the same way that he liked her. He still couldn't believe how lucky they had been in the whole Michael situation. What was the chance of him falling in love with someone in France around the same time that Harry wanted to get together with Ginny? Whatever the reasons were, he was happy. He knew that Ginny would have been nervous about breaking up with him and that she would feel guilty for doing so. She was too nice of a person and she would not want to have hurt anyone's feelings. But it had all worked out for them.

He stopped her when they reached the bottom of the stairs to pull her close into his arms for another soft kiss. He framed her face with his hands and kissed her softly. “Mmm, I'm so glad that we're together now.”

Ginny smiled up at him, licking her lips to hold his taste in. “Me too. Come on, we need to go tell everyone the good news.”

He grinned. "Uncle Sirius already knows and well, I told Da and Uncle Remus that I kissed you so I don't think that they'll be too surprised."

Ginny grinned. "So that only leaves Mum, Dad, Fred, George, and Hermione and eventually Bill and Charlie."

"Guess so."

Ginny squeezed his hand gently in reassurance. "Don't worry. It's going to be just fine."

He sighed and leaned in to kiss her softly again. "I hope you're right."

They headed into the living room where everyone was still hanging out for the celebration party and by the way that all of the attention had turned towards them, Harry assumed that Ron had already made the announcement. James was grinning at him and Sirius only continued to hold that knowing smile while wiggling his eyebrows suggestively at them. Remus only smiled and Fred and George were rubbing their hands together with identical evil grins on their faces. Molly and Arthur were also smiling and Hermione was grinning broadly. Before they could say anything, they found themselves being passed around the room for hugs and congratulations. Apparently, the entire room had been wondering when they would end up together. Harry wasn't sure if he found this unnerving or not. After all, he hadn't even known he had feelings for Ginny so how did everyone else know?

Hermione grinned at him before pulling him into her arms for a hug. "Oh Harry! I'm so happy for you! I knew that you liked her."

"You did? But I didn't even know I liked her until the beginning of the summer."

Hermione grinned. "I noticed that you liked her when she arrived and you jumped to catch her from tumbling out of the fireplace. The look on your face was ... priceless."

Harry grinned. "Well, I'm glad that I could amuse you."

Hermione laughed. "Anytime. Uh-oh, here comes Trouble Number One and Trouble Number Two."

Harry turned around to where Hermione was looking and sighed when he saw Fred and George heading towards him. Harry managed a small smile as he watched them walk over to him. He was a little nervous about how they were going to react to the fact that he was dating their baby sister. Ron had been right about one thing – it probably was not going to be good. Or in Hermione's own words – here comes trouble. His nerves didn't exactly get any better when he realized that Hermione had headed over to talk to Ginny leaving him very much alone.

"Hey guys, how's the inventing going?"

Fred grinned. "Brilliantly! In fact, we've been talking to Dung, you know Mundungus Fletcher from the Order, and he's going to be getting us some ... stuff through some of his ... business associates."

Harry only nodded at this as he knew through the Marauders that Dung was a thief. And that his business associates were not exactly the most honest people in the world. As long as Molly didn't find out he figured the twins were safe enough.

"Yeah and not to mention the fact that Sirius has given us free reign over the stuff in his house. He told Dobby and Winky not to throw out anything until we get a chance to look it over to see if we can use it for any of our products. We've been experimenting with Doxies, among other things. Good thing Sirius' house is such a dump!" George replied.

Harry laughed. "It's nice to know that something good came out of it." He sighed and decided that the idle conversation was making him more nervous. He wanted to know what the twins were going to do to him. "Alright, so what are you guys going to do to me?"

George looked shocked. "Do to you? Fred, my heart just breaks at the thought that our very own benefactor doesn't trust us?"

Fred nodded solemnly and pretended to wipe a tear from his eye.  
“Aye. It is sad. How can you not trust us, Harry?”

Harry grinned. “Because I’ve known you for five years.”

George seemed to consider this for a moment before he spoke.  
“That’s a good point, Fred.”

“It is, yes.”

George grinned wickedly. “Well, in that case ...” then before Harry could blink they pulled him close in a tight bear hug. “Welcome to the family!”

“We always knew that you and our little Gin-Gin had a thing for each other!”

“More like hoped.” George piped in.

“That git Corner didn’t deserve her!”

“But you don’t deserve her either for that matter!”

“We just happen to like you loads better!”

“But if you hurt her –”

“In any way, shape or form –”

“We will kill you.”

“In a most creative and painful way of course.”

“After all, we wouldn’t want to ruin our reputation otherwise.”

“We have rules to uphold you know.”

“Clear?”

Harry grinned as he finally managed to pull himself away from their

grasp. "Clear."

Fred slapped Harry playfully on the back. "See? We'll all get along just fine."

George nodded and then Harry felt a weird tingling sensation that was much different from when he was trying to change his form or work on his wandless magic begin to take over his body. He looked down and realized that his entire body was turning royal blue.

He groaned. "I should have known that I wouldn't get away that easily."

Fred grinned. "Well, we had to test our new product somehow."

"So what exactly is this supposed to do?"

George laughed. "Make you blue."

Harry grinned. "Besides that. I mean, really why would anyone just want to be blue?"

George grinned wickedly. "Oh, that's not all it did. That's the only part that you can see at the moment."

"What do you mean?"

He heard a gasp from behind him and he spun around to where Hermione was standing, her hand over her mouth as she tried to stop giggling.

"No really, what can't I see?"

He heard a snort of laughter from the other end of the room and he turned around to look at his father.

James grinned. "Brilliant boys. You two will definitely have a good career in a joke shop."

Molly turned around then and let out a shriek when she saw Harry.

“Fred! George! What have you done to Harry?”

Finally, Sirius pushed Harry in front of a mirror so that he could really see himself. Apparently when looking down at his body he could only see that he was blue, but when standing in front of a mirror he could see the full impact of what one of the twins’ new products had done. Not only was his entire body and glasses blue but he had patches of neon orange fur shaped like hearts on his stomach, his forehead, over his ears, around each ankle and wrist, and one huge puffy fur-ball on his arse. He had fangs coming out of his mouth in rainbow colours and he had what looked like boils on his hands. But that wasn’t the weird part.

The weird part was that he also wore a huge green hat with a vulture on top of it – similar to what Neville’s Gran wore. He wore hot pink stiletto heels that were definitely the most painful shoes ever as they were at least two sizes too small and the toes pointed upwards with a tiny gold bell that jingled when he moved. His hair, which was normally messy and black, had also turned neon orange. Not to mention the boils that had developed in places that no one could see which were extremely painful. He also found himself wearing a canary yellow tube top and a lime green leather mini skirt that was sitting low enough on his hips to show the top of a hot pink G-string sticking out above the skirt and the orange fur. He was hardly looking his best.

“Haha, very funny guys. Can you change me back now?”

Ginny giggled from behind them. “Forge, Gred!! Come on now!”

George grinned. “It only lasts twenty minutes and then he will be back to normal.”

Fred nodded. “Interesting that he turned blue though. George and I turned green.”

“It must affect people differently.”

“We’ll add it to our research!” They exclaimed together.

Molly only groaned. "You boys are nothing but trouble! Where have you gotten the money to even do all of this inventing and research?"

Harry raised his hand calmly, surprised to find that he also had long nails in neon purple. "That's my fault, Molly; I gave them my Triwizard earnings."

Molly glared at him before her lips twitched. "Well, then you deserve this, don't you?"

"What is this product called anyway?" Remus asked in curiosity.

Fred grinned. "Instant Transvestite – Technicolour."

"Technicolour?" James asked.

George nodded. "We're working on one that makes the person entirely black and white but we haven't perfected it yet."

"And the point of this particular product would be?" Ginny asked.

"Pure entertainment." Fred replied with a grin.

"Okay," Harry replied. "How did you do it?"

George grinned. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, how did you get me to change? You hugged me and slapped me on the back."

Fred held up a tiny neon green strip of what looked almost like wax paper. "With this! I just held it to your neck for a few seconds and voila! Instant Transvestite – Technicolour"

James grinned. "It is pretty amusing. Brilliant too. Why did you come up with it?"

Fred grinned wickedly. "Well, it originally started as an add on to our fine memory of Neville's boggart."

Harry snorted. "Snape in a dress?"

George nodded. "Aye. But we decided to tweak it a bit."

Ginny nodded. "So all you have to do is touch someone with this little strip of paper and it will appear."

"Yup, but it needs to be held for at least five seconds." Fred explained.

Remus grinned. "You two are going to make a fortune."

Molly smirked. "Well, if Harry wouldn't have given them that money."

Harry only grinned as everyone continued to laugh at his crazy appearance. Then he groaned loudly when he realized that Sirius was snapping pictures. "HEY! Come on now!"

Sirius only grinned. "Oh no, Harry, these are being printed and kept for a perfect blackmail opportunity."

James only laughed. "He's got quite a few blackmail pictures of me too, so don't feel bad."

Harry glared at Fred and George. "I'm going to get you two back for this."

George looked shocked. "He dares to challenge the masters?"

Ginny stood next to Harry and grinned. "I'll help him."

Fred paled considerably. "Oh, but Ginny dear, you wouldn't do that to your own dear brothers now, would you?"

Ginny grinned. "Damn right I would."

"Ginevra Molly Weasley! You watch your language!" Molly exclaimed.

Ginny blushed. "Sorry Mum."

Harry leaned over to whisper in her ear, "Ginevra?"



She blushed. "Mum thought it was exotic. And it's Ginny unless you want me to hex you."

Harry grinned. "Alright, whatever you say. So you're really going to help me with Fred and George?"

Ginny nodded. "Yes and I already have a plan."

Harry grinned broadly. "Good, I can't wait to hear it."

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The next day, Fred and George were wary of Harry and Ginny all day long. They knew that the two of them were plotting a small revenge and had no intention of letting them succeed. However, Harry and Ginny already knew that the twins would do so. So Harry convinced Maddy to put a small portion of a sleeping draught in the twins pumpkin juice for lunch. They would never suspect the house elves after all.

The two of them passed out quickly so Harry and Ginny set to work. Harry lifted them onto the bed and they began to undress them. Once they wore nothing but their boxer shorts Sirius came in.

"No, no, no! You got to make it better than that!" He replied before he pulled out his wand and quickly transfigured their underwear into hot pink G-strings. "There you go." He used his wand to move them so that they were wrapped around each other. "There, perfect."

Ginny grinned wickedly. "Oh, that's even better!" She pulled out her camera and started snapping pictures from every direction. "Wait! I just thought of something!"

She pulled out some pink lipstick from her pocket and quickly painted both of their lips. Then she began to apply eye shadow and mascara in dark colours, framing their eyes.

Harry grinned. "I've got an idea." He whispered it to Sirius and Sirius began to use his wand to make lipstick kisses all over their bodies so

that it matched the lip stick they each wore.

The three of them cackled in laughter as Ginny snapped pictures. Then they left the room, hiding the camera in James' room for protection.

Harry and Ginny headed downstairs laughing at their joke and wondering how the twins were going to react when they woke up. They made themselves comfortable on the couch in the living room and Ginny leaned back against Harry and sighed.

"I'm a genius, I know!"

Harry grinned. "Definitely! I'm so glad that Uncle Sirius helped. My wandless magic abilities are not that advanced yet. If only we could do magic outside of school!"

Ginny laughed. "I can't wait to see their reactions." She turned in his arms and reached up to kiss him softly.

When her lips touched his it was just like the first time. The heat was just eating them alive. Their stomachs tingled and knotted as their hands raced into each other's hair as they took the kiss deeper. Someone groaned but they weren't sure who, they were too involved in each other's taste and touch. Harry slid his hand along her back, through that soft silky hair that drove him crazy. He pulled back and smiled at her, watching as her beautiful chocolate brown eyes fluttered open. Then he brought his mouth down to her neck.

Ginny moaned as his lips moved across her throat. Her heart was pounding in her chest and her hands were fisted in his hair as she held him close to her. When he moved back to her lips, she greedily kissed him back. She wanted to devour him whole. She parted her lips for his tongue and she moaned into his mouth as he kissed her.

Harry wasn't sure how long they stayed that way, curled up on the couch and snogging but they broke apart when they heard two identical shrieks coming from upstairs. They hurried towards the sound and when they got to the room where they had left the twins they only grinned as they watched the encounter.

“What do you mean what do I mean? I mean, how the hell did this happen, Fred?”

Fred shrugged. “You’re asking me! Do you really think I put you in that G-String and that I ... put make-up on and ... stuff?”

George shook his head. “No! But I didn’t do it! So who else does that leave? Our door was locked and booby-trapped! We would have heard if someone came in!”

“Are you sure about that, boys?” Ginny asked as she leaned back casually against Harry, his hands resting on her waist. “By the way, I’ve always wondered what you two did alone in your room, but this ... I never expected this.”

“YOU!” Fred shrieked, turning to point at them. “You did this!”

Harry grinned. “Prove it.”

George groaned. “This was ... this was ... you play dirty!”

Ginny giggled. “And we’ve got loads of pictures.”

Fred paled. “Pictures?”

Ginny nodded. “Tons of them. So if you try to pull anything on us ... well, I bet there are some people at Hogwarts who would like to see those.”

Harry grinned. “Gin, you’re scary sometimes.”

Ginny laughed and kissed him softly. “Well, I did grow up with these two.”

Fred and George only continued to stare at them evilly. Finally, Fred spoke up. “Alright, you win. Now get out of here so we can change back to normal.”

Ginny grinned. “Thanks!”

They waved goodbye before they closed the door and started laughing all over again.

“Did you see their faces?” Harry asked.

Ginny nodded. “Oh, I’m going to love rubbing their noses in this one!”

Harry grinned and pulled her close to kiss her softly. “Me too.”

Ginny grinned. “Well, Mr. Potter, should we go find Sirius and tell him of our genius plan and how it worked out so well?”

Harry ran his fingers gently through her hair before he licked his lips. “Later,” he kissed her softly. “Much later.”

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## Chapter 31: All Aboard

**Author's Notes:** please review!!

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### Chapter XXXI – All Aboard

The rest of the summer went by pretty uneventful. The idea of having pictures of Fred and George that they couldn’t find seemed to freak them out enough that the twins did not pull any pranks on Harry and Ginny, much to their relief. And Harry and Ginny managed to find quite a bit of time together on their own which they tended to use mostly for snogging.

When it came to lessons, the Marauders had indeed allowed Ron, Hermione, and Ginny in on becoming an animagus. They had thought that it was a great idea. Of course, it had been tricky as they had all decided to keep it a secret from Molly, Arthur, Fred, and George, but they succeeded. James had made the potion for them and they had each seen the animal that they would become. Ron saw a tiger;

Hermione a doe; and Ginny saw two animals to everyone's surprise, a fox and an eagle. Ginny was shocked when she told everyone that she had seen two forms as was everyone else. More than one form was very rare after all. Ginny had questioned Harry about it after the first lesson.

"Why do you think that I can produce two?"

Harry shrugged. "I'm not sure. Maybe it has something to do with Voldemort."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you did sort of adopt some of his skills after the Chamber, right? So maybe you adopted a bit of his power as well which would increase your power or something and give you that second form. Does that make sense?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, that makes sense. It was just odd, you know? When Ron and Hermione only saw one form and you saw four and I saw two. I mean, I never expected to see two. Hey, with all of the power that your Da has, I wonder why he never saw more than one form."

Harry shrugged. "That's a good question. I'll ask him about that later."

"Ask who about what later?" James asked as he came into the living room and took a seat.

"Da, Ginny and I were just talking about our animagi forms and I suggested that maybe since she adopted some of the power and skills from Voldemort because of the Chamber that that could be why she has two forms. And then she asked why you don't have two forms?" Harry explained. "I mean, you have the same power that I do, right?"

James sighed as he glanced around the room for a minute before putting a silencing charm around it. "Actually, I have three forms."

"WHAT?" Harry asked in surprise.

James nodded. "But I've only ever tried one. You see, when I started the transformation I was thirteen years old and I hadn't yet learned all about the power that I had. I made the potion and I remember seeing three animals and thinking that it was brilliant but then Sirius and Peter only saw one. So I just chose one and pretended that I only had one as well."

Harry stared at his father in surprise. "Why have you never tried to learn them?"

James shrugged. "Well, I think originally I was too embarrassed to think that I was different from my friends or something I don't know. And then I just grew up and never really thought about it again. You two are the only people that know this."

"Oh," Harry replied. "I was also wondering, well, it took you close to six months to change your first arm, right? And Sirius said the same – why didn't you produce faster like I did?"

James grinned. "I did. It took me four months not six but I held back until Sirius caught up. I was good in school, Harry, incredibly smart and I didn't like to show it. I wanted to learn at the same pace as everyone else, so I held back. When I changed my arm I didn't tell anyone I simply waited for Sirius and then I did mine at the same time. I think Sirius was suspicious of me for a while but I always denied anything. It only took me a year and a half to fully do the transformation. You were still a lot faster than me."

Harry nodded. "So you just ... held back all of the time? In everything?"

James nodded. "Yes. I'm not saying it was a good thing to do, Harry, but I had all of this power that I didn't understand or how to use it. You never questioned it the way that I did, you simply accepted that it was a part of who you were. When you were twelve however, Dumbledore also told you that Voldemort channelled some of his powers into you. You accepted that that's why you were different than others as well. That's why I think that you never really noticed that you were more powerful. I did notice and I never understood until I

was fifteen. But by that time, I never really considered working on my other two forms; I was much too focused on trying to win the heart of Lily Evans.”

Ginny smiled. “That’s sweet, James. Have you ever thought about trying those forms now?”

“I’ve been thinking a lot about it since Harry has mastered two forms. I think that I might tell Sirius and Remus about it and then try to learn it all over again. If I’m not too old.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Old? Please, you’re only thirty-three. So what were your other two forms anyway?”

James grinned. “Well, the white stag as you know and then a raven and a panther.”

“Wow! Da, work on the raven next. It’s the most amazing feeling to be up there flying around. Trust me on this.”

James grinned. “I will.” He removed the silencing charm from around the room. “I will also tell the Marauders about my secret, I promise. Now for your lessons, I’m sure that you’ve been wondering how those are going to proceed now that you’re going back to school, am I right?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I have been a little curious.”

“Good,” James replied. “Alright, Sirius, Remus, and I will be coming to Hogwarts once a week to work with you. We’ll be working in Dumbledore’s office every Sunday afternoon.”

“Alright, that sounds good.”

James grinned. “Good because now that you’ve mastered all of the spells and curses and charms from the last four years of school you’re going to have homework from me. Whenever you learn a new spell or charm or curse, I need you to do it wandlessly as well. That will be up to you to teach yourself that. We don’t have time to continue to go over new material with you. The first time we get

together I'll be teaching you more about the elementals and creating them yourself. We'll meet the second Sunday after school begins, that way you've had two full weeks of school. Got it?"

Harry nodded. "Got it."

"Good. And I assume that you're going to continue to teach your friends on the animagus lessons?"

"Yup, all set. With this being O.W.L. year and all too it will be a lot of work."

James nodded. "Yes, it will be." He stood up and he smiled down at his son, who had his arm wrapped around Ginny as she cuddled close to him. "Harry?"

"Yeah Da?"

"Those dreams that you've been having lately, I want to know if they escalate as well."

"I promise."

James nodded and left the room as Ginny looked up at Harry. "The dreams about the corridor?"

"Yeah. I've had it twice already. It might not mean anything at all but ... it's always good to keep Da posted." He replied as he remembered the dreams that he'd been having about a long corridor ending at a locked door. After that dream about the Riddle House where he discovered that it had actually happened he made sure that any odd dream that he had he told his father right away. He figured it was better to be safe than sorry.

The two of them went up to bed for the evening and Harry made sure that he hadn't left any last minute packing for the morning before he climbed into bed. Tomorrow he would be going back to Hogwarts. He could only smile as he closed his eyes and dreamed of Ginny.

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The next morning was crazy hectic as Dumbledore had insisted that they couldn't head into London until they had a full guard from the Order. Harry knew that it was for his sake and he didn't really appreciate it. It seemed like so much more work and he hardly thought that he was likely to be attacked by Voldemort in broad daylight on his way to school, especially when Voldemort had yet to even show himself since the incident in June. So that morning, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Harry, Fred, George, Sirius, Remus, James, Molly, and Arthur all flocked to Grimmauld Place by nine o'clock that morning. Once they were all safely sitting in the kitchen and all of their trunks and things in the entrance way did Remus speak.

"Now, I know that the train doesn't leave for another two hours, however, we have to wait here for members of the Order who will be taking us all to King's Cross."

"Don't you Da, Sirius, Molly, and Arthur all qualify as Order members?" Harry asked.

James nodded. "Yes, but we need a few more. Moody will be coming in to help us, the real Moody, as well as Tonks. Only then will we be able to leave."

Hermione elbowed Harry at the table and he turned to look at her. "What?"

"Look at Tonks and Remus when Tonks gets here, I swear, there is some major attraction between those two."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Alright, I'll look. But I still think that you're crazy."

"Who's crazy?" Ginny asked.

Harry turned to smile at her. "Hermione thinks that Uncle Remus and Tonks have the hots for each other. She wants me to look closely this time as last time when Tonks brought her to the manor, I didn't see it."

Ginny nodded. "Alright, I'll look too. Who's Tonks?"

"Sirius' second cousin. She's really pretty and weird and a little clumsy." Harry explained.

As if on cue, something was knocked over in the entrance hall and Mrs. Black's portrait began to shriek loudly. Tonks came into the room, this time with hair down to her bum and it was honey blonde. "Sorry, everyone."

"Hey Tonks! How did your hair grow so fast?" Harry asked.

Tonks grinned at him. "Wotcher Harry! And that's because I'm a metamorphmagus."

"What's that?"

Tonks took a seat across from him at the table. "It's a special skill that only a few witches and wizards are born with. It means that I can change my appearance at will. See?" She closed her eyes as if in concentration and then her hair was back to the short spikes and in bubble gum pink.

"Brilliant!" Ginny replied.

Tonks grinned. "Thanks. You must be Molly and Arthur's daughter, Ginny right?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah and this is my brother Ron."

"Nice to meet you," Tonks replied.

They all turned when they heard Moody's gruff voice in the doorway but Harry winced as he got another elbow in the rib. He turned to look at Hermione again. "Ow!"

"Look at Remus," she whispered.

Harry looked over at his honorary uncle, not quite sure as to what he was looking for. Remus' eyes had turned to that dark gold again and

his eyes were staring directly at Tonks. He looked over at Tonks to see if she was looking at Remus, but she seemed to be blushing a bit and pointedly looking in another direction. Could Hermione be right? Was there more there than he was seeing?

"Well, do you see it? He obviously is attracted to her and vice versa." Hermione replied.

Harry shrugged. "Alright, yeah I see it. You were right. Happy now?"

Hermione only smirked at him as Moody instructed them all to come out into the entrance way with their belongings. Apparently they were taking the Knight Bus to the station.

They all headed outside and onto the bus that had appeared when Tonks held out her wand. They climbed up as James gave the conductor, some guy named Stan Shunpike, the proper amount of money for everyone aboard.

"I've always wanted to travel on this thing," Ron replied. "I heard it's a lot of fun."

Sirius grinned. "You won't think so in a minute."

Harry didn't have time to ask what Sirius meant by that as the bus took off at full speed and he flew back against the seat, Ginny spilling over into his lap. He placed his hands on her hips to steady her as they almost fell out of the seat. He glanced around at everyone else and was happy to see that it wasn't only he and Ginny that were having trouble. Hermione was practically in Ron's lap; Fred and George were in the aisle way; Sirius, James, Molly, Arthur, and Moody were holding onto bars on the seats but they were still sliding everywhere; and to Harry's surprise, Remus had his hands on Tonks' hips as the two of them tried not to fly around the back of the bus.

When the bus finally stopped at King's Cross station, Harry wasn't the only one who was glad to get off. They gathered up their belongings and made their way through the wall and onto Platform Nine and Three-Quarters. They said goodbye and then made their way up onto the train. Ron and Hermione headed into the prefect compartment

while Fred and George went to go find Lee Jordan. Harry and Ginny continued to walk through the train until they found Neville standing outside of a compartment looking unsure.

“Are you going inside, Nev?” Harry asked.

Neville shrugged. “Well, I er ... I think that this one’s full.”

Ginny glanced inside and grinned. “Neville! It’s only Luna!” Ginny headed inside and grinned. “Hey Luna!”

Luna Lovegood (better known as Loony Luna Lovegood), a pretty girl with blonde hair who had her wand tucked back behind her ear as if for safekeeping, turned to smile at them. “Hello Ginny.”

“Hey Luna, this is my friend Neville Longbottom and my boyfriend Harry Potter.”

Luna nodded. “Wit beyond measure is man’s greatest treasure.” She turned her attention back to the magazine that she was reading. It was called *The Quibbler* and she was apparently reading it upside down.

Harry glanced at Ginny again as he took a seat next to her. It was the first time that he had been introduced as her boyfriend and he liked it. Even if her friend Luna was kind of odd. He only knew her briefly to see her. “So uh, Luna, how was your summer?”

Luna shrugged. “Dad and I went looking for a crumple-horned snackork but we didn’t find one. He kept escaping us.”

Harry nodded. “Uh, I see.”

The train started moving and Neville pulled a plant out from his trunk. “Look what my Uncle Algie gave me for my birthday. He got it from Assyria. It’s called a *Mimulus Mimbletonia*.”

“Does it do anything?” Harry asked, as he remembered Neville’s love of Herbology.

Neville nodded excitedly. "It has a great defensive mechanism. Watch this." Sticking his tongue between his teeth, he carefully poked at it with a quill and it exploded sticky goo around everyone in the compartment. "Oops."

The compartment door slid open and Harry carefully wiped goo off of his glasses as he looked up to see who had entered. To his surprise, Cho was standing there.

"Er, hi Harry, is this a bad time?" She asked nervously.

Harry shrugged. "Well, probably not the best, yeah."

She nodded. "I'll talk to you later then." She closed the compartment door again and Harry looked over at Ginny.

"What do you think that's about?"

Ginny shrugged. "Who knows? Okay, let me fix this, Scourgify!"

The compartment and everyone in it became spotless once more.

"Thanks Ginny," Neville replied. "So, how long have you and Harry been together?"

Ginny grinned as she leaned back against Harry. "Almost three weeks now."

Neville grinned. "Well, congratulations. I always thought that you two would look good together. What happened with Michael?"

"Actually, it worked out really well as he wrote me almost at the same I was going to write him asking to break up. Apparently he met some girl in France who's supposed to be coming to Hogwarts this year." Ginny explained.

Neville nodded. "That's neat. I didn't know that students could come over and switch schools."

Ginny nodded. "Sure they can."

They all looked up when the compartment door opened again, this time Michael Corner was standing there. "Um, hi."

Ginny smiled at him. "Hi Michael."

He grinned and then let out a sigh of relief. "Good, you're smiling. I wasn't sure if your letter was serious or not. You're really okay with everything?"

She nodded. "I'm fine. Do I get to meet Dominique?"

He grinned. "Yeah," he reached over and pulled a pretty girl with dark black hair into view. "Dominique St. Clair, this is some friends of mine, Ginny Weasley, Harry Potter, Neville Longbottom, and Luna Lovegood."

Dominique smiled. "Bonjour! Eet iz neece to meet you."

Ginny smiled. "It's nice to meet you, too. Are you nervous about starting at a new school?"

Dominique smiled. "A leetle, oui."

Michael slipped his arm around her. "I told her that everything will be fine. I think that she's nervous about the whole house thing. I'm hoping she's a Ravenclaw."

Ginny grinned. "Well, good luck then." Michael and Dominique waved goodbye before leaving the compartment. Ginny turned to look at Harry then. "Wow, she was beautiful. Every guy in school is going to be so jealous of Michael."

Harry grinned and kissed the tip of her nose. "She was alright. I think I got the better end of the deal. Michael doesn't know what he gave up."

Ginny blushed and kissed him softly as the compartment door opened up again. Ginny squealed in delight when she recognized Colin and Demelza and she jumped to her feet to throw herself into

first Colin's arms and then Demelza's.

"Oh, I missed you guys!"

Colin grinned as he pulled her back into his arms for another hug. "I missed you. And what's with the last letter I get from you? Are you trying to kill me with suspense?"

Ginny grinned. "Whatever do you mean?"

Demelza rolled her eyes. "Pul-lease! I quote: *P.S. I'm dating Harry*. How did this happen? When did this happen?"

Colin nodded. "We are insisting on details."

Harry grinned. "I am in the room too, you know."

Colin grinned and sat down next to Harry. "So I noticed after that kiss. Well, how did this come about?"

Harry grinned. "I just kissed her one day."

Demelza's mouth dropped open. "And?"

Ginny blushed. "And I kissed him back."

"What about Michael?" Colin asked.

"We broke up. He's dating someone else as well."

Colin grinned. "Well congrats to both of you. Dee and I have been searching the train since it started moving to try to find you two."

Demelza grinned. "We've been dying of curiosity. So, did anything else interesting happen this summer?"

Ginny shrugged. "Not really. That was really the most exciting thing. Oh! But Percy, my git of a brother, left the family."

"WHAT?" Colin exclaimed.

As Ginny began to explain the story about Percy, Harry turned to Neville. "So how was your summer?"

Neville shrugged. "It was alright. I didn't do anything interesting really. Gran wanted to hang out at home and redo the house. So my uncle and I repainted it and re-shingled the roof and stuff. It wasn't very exciting. You?"

Harry shrugged. "I didn't do much either. Just got Ginny."

Neville grinned. "You two really do make a great couple."

Harry grinned. "Thanks." He looked up when the compartment door opened once more and he grinned at Ron and Hermione. "Hey, how's life as a prefect?"

Ron groaned and sat down next to Luna. "So many rules! But you'll never guess who the prefects are from Slytherin? Malfoy and Pansy Parkinson."

Harry groaned. "Damn, rotten luck."

Ron nodded. "I know."

Hermione nodded. "Ravenclaw's got Anthony Goldstein and Padma Patil and Hufflepuff has Hannah Abbott and Ernie Macmillan."

"Interesting. I'm not surprised to learn that Hannah made prefect."

Ron nodded. "Well, you can bet that Malfoy's going to abuse his position."

"I wouldn't put it past him."

They all looked up when the compartment door opened again. This time it was Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle.

"Well, well, well, it's the compartment full of losers." Malfoy replied with a sneer.



Harry rolled his eyes. "You couldn't come up with anything better than that?"

Draco sneered at him and then he noticed the way that Ginny was leaning back against him. "Well, never thought you'd stoop low enough to date the Weaselette, Potter, but then again, I shouldn't be surprised."

Harry reached for his wand, but Ginny beat him too it. "At least Harry has a choice, aren't you betrothed, Draco?"

Malfoy paled. "Doesn't mean that I can't date other people!"

Ginny grinned. "Tell that to Pansy."

Malfoy looked sad for a minute before he masked it and slammed out of the compartment followed by Crabbe and Goyle. Harry grinned at Ginny. "Brilliant Gin!"

She grinned. "Well, he is betrothed to Pansy. He has to marry her straight out of Hogwarts."

Ron smirked. "No wonder he's so miserable all of the time. If I had to marry that cow I'd be miserable too."

Luna burst into hysterical laughter. "That cow! Ha! That was funny!" She exclaimed as she continued to laugh.

Everyone in the compartment began to laugh as well, though they weren't sure if they were laughing at Ron's face or Luna.

The ride went pretty smoothly after that and soon they were climbing off the train and making their way towards the school carriages. Harry stopped in his tracks when he approached them, however, because this year the carriages were not being led by themselves, they were being pulled by these gigantic black-winged horses.

"Hey, what do you reckon those things are there for?" Harry asked Ginny.

“What things?” Ginny asked as she held the cage with Ron’s owl in it.

“Those horse things?” When Ginny only continued to look at him funny he gulped. “Can’t you see them?”

Ginny reached up and kissed him softly. “No, I don’t see anything. You’re probably just tired.” She climbed into the carriage and Harry watched her go, wondering what was going on.

“You’re not crazy,” Luna said softly from next to him.

Harry looked down at her. “I’m not?”

Luna shook her head. “I’ve been able to see them since I first came to Hogwarts.”

She climbed into the carriage with Ginny, her butterbeer cork necklace rattling and Harry wondered if he really felt any better knowing that Loony Luna Lovegood could also see the horses. He shook the thoughts from his head and climbed into the carriage, wondering if there were really any creatures out there.

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## **Chapter 32: Back to School**

**Author's Notes:** please review!!

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## **Chapter XXXII – Back to School**

They all made their way into the Great Hall and took their seats. Harry was still wondering about those horses when he noticed who was bringing the first years in. He recognized the woman as Professor Grubbly-Plank, the one who had filled in for Hagrid after Rita Skeeter had written those terrible things about him the year before.

“Hey, where’s Hagrid?” Harry asked.

Ginny shrugged. “He must be doing something for the Order.”

Harry nodded. “That makes sense. I hope he comes back soon.”

He felt someone staring at him so he turned and found a short ugly, toad-like woman with big glasses staring at him from the Head Table. She wore an ugly pink cardigan and had lots of rings on her stubby fingers. “Who do you reckon that is?”

“The new DADA teacher, don’t you think?” Ginny supplied.

Harry shrugged. “She creeps me out.”

Ginny laughed. “Good to know. Now shush, I want to hear the Sorting Hat’s song.”

Harry nodded as he turned his attention to the hat:

*In times of old, when I was new,  
And Hogwarts barely started,  
The founders of our noble school  
Thought never to be parted.  
United by a common goal,  
They had the selfsame yearning  
To make the world’s best magic school  
And pass along their learning.  
“Together we will build and teach”  
The four good friends decided.  
And never did they dream that they  
Might someday be divided.  
For were there such good friends anywhere  
As Slytherin and Gryffindor?  
Unless it was the second pair  
Of Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw,  
So how could it have gone so wrong?  
How could such friendships fail?  
Why, I was there, so I can tell*

*The whole sad, sorry tale.  
Said Slytherin, "We'll teach just those  
Whose ancestry's purest."  
Said Ravenclaw, "We'll teach those whose  
Intelligence is surest."  
Said Gryffindor, "We'll teach all those  
With brave deeds to their name."  
Said Hufflepuff, "I'll teach the lot  
And treat them all the same."  
These differences caused little strife  
When first they came to light.  
For each of the four founders had  
A house in which they might  
Take only those they wanted, so,  
For instance, Slytherin  
Took only pure-blood wizards  
Of great cunning just like him.  
And only those of sharpest mind  
Were taught by Ravenclaw  
While the bravest and boldest  
Went to daring Gryffindor.  
Good Hufflepuff, she took the rest  
And taught them all she knew,  
Thus, the houses and their founders  
Maintained friendships firm and true.*

*So Hogwarts worked in harmony  
For several happy years,  
But then discord crept among us  
Feeding on our faults and fears.*

*The Houses that, like pillars four  
Had once held up our school  
Now turned upon each other and  
Divided, sought to rule.  
And for a while it seemed the school  
Must meet an early end.  
What with duelling and with fighting  
And the clash of friend on friend.  
And at last there came a morning*

*When old Slytherin departed  
And though the fighting then died out  
He left us quite downhearted.  
And never since the founders four  
Were whittled down to three  
Have the Houses been united  
As they were once meant to be.*

*And now the Sorting Hat is here  
And you all know the score:  
I sort you into Houses  
Because that is what I'm for.  
But this year I'll go further,  
Listen closely to my song:  
Though condemned I am to split you  
Still I worry that it's wrong,  
Though I must fulfill my duty  
And must quarter every year  
Still I wonder whether sorting  
May not bring the end I fear.  
Oh, know the perils, read the signs,  
The warning history shows,  
For our Hogwarts is in danger  
From external, deadly foes  
And we must unite inside her  
Or we'll crumble from within  
I have told you, I have warned you ...  
Let the Sorting now begin.*

Harry wasn't the only person to sit quietly for a moment after the song. The hat had been warning them of danger? The hat told the school that the houses had to unite under times of trouble. Nearly Headless Nick told them that the hat had given warnings before. Nick figured the hat thought it had a duty to warn the school when trouble was brewing. They watched as all of the first years were sorted into their proper houses and Dominique was to her delight sorted into Ravenclaw. Everyone ate the feast happily and when the last of the desserts were cleared away, Dumbledore stood up.

“Welcome, welcome, to another year.” Dumbledore replied. “I’d like to welcome our new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, Professor Dolores Umbridge.”

Everyone applauded politely as Umbridge stood up, which didn’t do much as she was obviously extremely short. She waved and then cleared her throat, making a small annoying ‘hem, hem’. Everyone looked at her quizzically as she obviously planned to make some sort of speech. No one could ever remember someone doing that before. Dumbledore took a seat as Umbridge began to speak in what was an extremely high-pitched and girlish voice that was also very annoying. What she was saying, no one was quite sure as it was so dull that conversations began to erupt around the room or students went to sleep. Harry felt his own eyes beginning to droop down just as she finished.

“Well, that’s interesting to know,” Hermione murmured as she turned back to them.

Harry looked up at her in surprise. “You actually managed to pay attention?? But then again, you can handle Binns without sugar.”

Ron nodded. “Go on then, what did she say?”

Hermione glared at them. “Basically that the ministry is interfering at Hogwarts.”

“Why? I thought that everything had been worked out with Madam Bones.”

Ginny nodded. “After the trial she was very understanding and seemed to take everything in stride quite well.”

Hermione shook her head. “There’s one thing that I noticed about Madam Bones at the trial. She may have taken everything really well but did she once say that she believed Harry and Dumbledore about Voldemort? She said that she must believe them because Dumbledore would never lie but she never actually said yes she believed them.”

Harry thought back to the trial very carefully as he tried to recall the conversation that they had had with her once the curse had been lifted. Hermione was right; she had never come out directly and said so.

“Also, the *Daily Prophet* is still going on and on about what a raving lunatic you are, Harry. They haven’t stopped, which makes me assume that Madam Bones obviously refuses to believe that Voldemort is back as well.” Hermione explained.

Harry groaned. “So people are still going to think that I’m crazy? So what the hell is this Umbridge woman going to go on about then?”

Hermione shrugged. “I don’t know but I have feeling that she is not going to be the greatest teacher.”

Ginny squeezed Harry’s hand gently in hers. “You can’t do anything about it, Harry. You’re just going to have to learn to ignore it and to try to keep your temper in check. The last thing that anyone is going to need is for you to get in more trouble.”

Harry glared at her. “Well, how the hell am I supposed to react, Gin? The world thinks that I’m a bloody raving lunatic and they refuse to believe that the darkest wizard of the century has come back! Now I’m expected to just ignore it and not bloody well get angry!”

Ginny reached up and silenced him with a kiss. “Yes. Harry, I know that it’s a lot to ask but there’s nothing else that you can do. Alright?”

He sighed as he held his forehead against hers. “I guess so.”

She grinned. “Good. Now pay attention to Dumbledore.”

They turned their attention back to Dumbledore who was simply reviewing a few school rules before he dismissed them. Ron and Hermione stood up and began their prefect duties by leading the first years up to the common room. Harry stood up with Ginny and heard someone call his name. He turned around in time to see Professor O’Bryan hurrying towards him.

“Hi Harry, I wanted to catch you before you went up to bed. Did you have a good summer?”

Harry shrugged. “Yeah, it was alright.”

O’Bryan smiled. “Good. Listen, can you meet with me tomorrow before breakfast to go over the presentation information with me?”

Harry nodded. He had gotten his essay into a presentation fairly quickly and was anxious to get it over with now. “Sure.”

O’Bryan beamed at him. “Excellent. My office then, eight a.m.?”

“Right, see you in the morning, Professor.”

“Goodnight, Harry, good night, Ginny.”

Ginny smiled at O’Bryan. “Goodnight, Professor.” When O’Bryan left, Ginny turned to Harry. “So you’re going to do the presentation then?”

He nodded. “Well, I told her I would. She seems really excited about it.”

Ginny laughed. “O’Bryan always gets excited about her class. She’s a brilliant teacher. Ancient Runes is definitely one of my favourite classes.”

Harry grinned. “Yeah, me too.”

He walked hand in hand with Ginny before he kissed her goodnight and headed up to his dormitory. His trunk was already stowed at the end of his bed and Hedwig’s cage was hanging in the corner. He turned at the sound of the door opening and grinned at Seamus Finnigan and Dean Thomas.

“Hey guys.”

Dean grinned. “Hey Harry! How was your summer?”

Harry shrugged. “Same old, same old. You?”



Dean grinned. "Ditto. Seamus?"

Seamus shrugged. "It was alright. Lavender and I wrote letters all summer."

Dean rolled his eyes. "Would you just ask her out already, mate?"

Seamus grinned. "We're just friends. She doesn't like that me that way. Besides, my summer changed a bit when I got my Hogwarts letter."

"Meaning?" Harry asked.

"Me mam didn't want me to come back to school."

Harry turned to look at Seamus in surprise. "Why?"

"Because of you."

"Me?" Harry asked, already dreading the answer.

Seamus nodded. "She believes everything in the *Daily Prophet*."

Harry sneered. "Great."

"No listen, Harry, I don't believe it. I know that Dumbledore wouldn't have made that announcement last year otherwise but me mam, she won't listen to reason."

Harry nodded. He didn't think that it was fair for people to refuse to believe him and to think that he had really only been telling lies last year. He figured that it was best not to answer so he changed into his pyjamas and climbed into bed, shutting the curtains around him angrily. Seamus and Dean didn't say anything. He heard Neville and Ron come in, but he didn't talk. He just laid there in silence and wondered if everyone was going to think this all year long.

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The next day started off with problems. Hermione was in a rant because Fred and George were advertising for paying jobs as testers for their products. She thought that this was wrong and refused to allow it. Harry explained to them about how Seamus' mother didn't want Seamus to come back because she thought that he was a lunatic. But he felt a little better when Hermione mentioned that Parvati and Lavender believed him and not the *Daily Prophet*.

Angelina Johnson informed Harry that she had been made Quidditch captain in Oliver's absence and the idea of a practice cheered his mood a bit. As they headed to their first class (Harry dropping Ginny off at Herbology with a kiss goodbye) they ran into Cho again in the hall.

"Hi Harry," she replied with a smile.

"Hi."

"Um, how was your summer?" She asked.

"It was alright. How was yours?"

She smiled warmly. "It was alright."

"Hey!" Ron interrupted. "How long have you been a Tornadoes fan?" He asked, pointing openly at the pin on her shirt.

Cho glanced down and shrugged. "Since I was six."

Ron nodded. "Good because a lot of people are simply jumping on the band-wagon so to speak."

Cho nodded. "Yeah well, I'm not. I'll talk to you later, Harry."

She hurried off and Hermione elbowed Ron. "What is wrong with you?"

"Ow! What was that for?"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Cho obviously wanted to talk to Harry and

there you go talking about Quidditch teams!”

Ron shrugged. “Well, sorry! The Tornadoes thing bugs me! I hate people who only support a team when their winning! It doesn’t show sportsmanship!”

“That’s beside the point, Ron!”

Harry glared at both of them. “Will you two stop already? Merlin! It’s only the first day!”

Hermione sighed. “Well, he was being a prat, Harry! Cho obviously wanted to speak to you.”

Harry shrugged. “Yeah, well, I have no idea why. I went out with her last year. It was a disaster, remember?”

“Maybe she wants to apologize or something then?” Hermione suggested.

“I have no idea. But come on, we’re going to be late for Charms.”

They hurried into class just as the bell sounded and as Flitwick began to take attendance he wondered, *what did Cho want?* She had come to find him twice on her own, which was odd enough, but why was she looking for him? Thoughts of Cho were pushed aside as Flitwick instructed them to open their textbooks and Harry found himself back in school.

Classes continued and Harry was getting tired of the strong lectures on O.W.L.s. Every single teacher started class off with a long winded lecture on how important O.W.L.s were and why they were taken. Snape started them off with the Draught of Peace, a difficult potion that Harry knew he had made perfectly even though Snape sneered and muttered an A grade at him. Trelawney had them doing dream interpretations, which was really very boring and when they finally moved onto DADA, they were in for a real surprise.

Umbridge made a small speech and the gist of it was that they would be learning Defensive Theory but no magic. The entire class made an

uproar at this announcement. Umbridge kept insisting that they would not run into any dark wizards in her classroom so why would they need to learn it; and if they knew the theory then surely they could do the spell when the time came. Harry stood up and before he could stop himself he was yelling.

“And what about Voldemort? Are we supposed to just lay down and let him kill us, is that it?”

Umbridge smiled an evil smile at him. “You-Know-Who doesn’t exist. He is not back. You’ve been telling lies and you expect people to believe you. You are lying and I will not tolerate it in my classroom.”

Harry glared at her. “I’m not lying! The *Daily Prophet* is lying! The entire MINISTRY is lying!”

“How dare you accuse the Ministry of Magic of lying to its people?”

“How dare you forget that Cedric Diggory was murdered by Lord Voldemort last June!”

By now the entire classroom was staring at Harry in wonder and in shock. No one knew the full story of what had happened in June and the fact that Harry had brought it up left everyone in suspense and curiosity.

Umbridge sneered at him. “Come here, Mr. Potter.”

Harry walked up to her desk and watched her as she carefully wrote a note and sealed it before handing it to him and giving him her sweetest smile.

“Take this to Professor McGonagall, won’t you dear?”

Harry glared at her before he took the note, stuffed his books in his bag and stormed out of the room. He was halfway to the staff room when he realized what he had done. He had certainly not kept his temper. He sighed and knocked carefully on McGonagall’s office door. She pulled it open and glanced down at him.

“Potter?”

Harry handed her the note. “Professor Umbridge asked that I give this to you.”

McGonagall led him into her office and closed the door before she took a seat and opened the wax seal. She read quietly for a few minutes before she turned to him. “Is this true?”

“What does it say?”

“It says that you yelled out that You-Know-Who was back and that the ministry is lying?”

Harry sighed. “Yeah, that’s true.”

“It also says here that she has given you detention with her every evening this week.”

“WHAT?”

McGonagall nodded. “Even if I could get you out of this detention, Potter, I wouldn’t. You need to control your temper a bit.”

“Alright.” Harry sighed.

“Have a biscuit, Potter.”

“I – huh?”

McGonagall smiled at him. “Have a biscuit.”

Harry took a biscuit from the tin that she had thrust in front of him.

“Listen, the ministry is ... I can’t explain it but they don’t seem to believe everything that is going on. They refuse to acknowledge that He Who Must Not Be Named has returned. They insist that there isn’t proof. We know there is. Dumbledore is fighting with them to understand but they think he’s gone senile. The Order is working towards figuring everything out. Potter, do you know why Dolores

Umbridge is here?"

"Because the ministry is interfering at Hogwarts?"

McGonagall nodded. "Exactly. Harry, Dolores Umbridge is reporting back and forth to the ministry. They are here to keep an eye on Dumbledore and an eye on anyone who might be too close to Dumbledore. Teachers included. Now, I know that you personally were supposed to have some kind of lessons with your father, Sirius, and Remus. The location for these lessons will have to change as there is no way that Umbridge can see you making your way to Dumbledore's office all of the time. She's going to get suspicious. Not to mention the fact that the Order is top secret and the members of the Order who do work here at Hogwarts need to stay hidden as well. Do you understand?"

Harry nodded. "Yes."

"Harry, you need to control your temper. I can't imagine how hard it must be for you when the entire world is accusing you of lies and on top of everything that you've been through. But you must learn to just keep it in or rave about it to your friends just do not lose your temper with Umbridge."

"I got it, Professor. I'll do my best I promise."

She smiled at him. "Good. So now that we have some time alone, why don't you tell me about your animagi?"

Harry grinned. "I finished. I managed to complete the phoenix and then I learnt the owl really quickly. I'm still working on the wolf though."

"Show me."

Harry changed into his phoenix form, flying around the room and flaming in different areas. The flying filled him with joy and he felt his anger slowly drain away a bit. He landed in his chair and changed back before changing into the owl next. He flew around again and made small circles around McGonagall's head before he changed

back.

“Potter, that’s excellent!” McGonagall replied. “I’m very proud of you. Let’s see how far you’ve progressed on the wolf.”

Harry changed his left arm into a black wolf’s paw and leg. He tried to change his right arm and to his surprise, it changed also. “Wow! That’s the first time I managed the right arm!”

McGonagall smiled. “Well, you’ll have to practice a bit there, won’t you? Would you like to continue your lessons with me?”

Harry nodded. “I would if you wouldn’t mind, Professor.”

“Of course. Every Wednesday evening at eight o’clock will do. You can tell your friends that you are doing extra-credit Transfiguration or for the sake of Umbridge anyway if she happens to find out.” McGonagall replied.

Harry grinned. “Alright, thanks Professor.”

“No problem. I’m anxious to see you use all four forms. Why don’t you go on down to dinner now, classes should be dismissed soon.”

Harry nodded. “Alright, thanks. Bye.”

He grabbed his bag and left the room, his anger no long present. McGonagall never failed to surprise him. He thought that he was going to be yelled at or get detention at the very least and instead she had offered him a biscuit. Now he had animagi lessons picking up again and Quidditch would be starting soon. He could keep his temper down with Umbridge ... at least he hoped.

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The next few days went by quickly. In Charms they practiced Summoning charms and in Transfiguration they worked on vanishing spells. In Care of Magical Creatures, Harry was sad to notice that Hagrid was still missing. His anger only intensified when Draco commented on Hagrid’s absence and then whispered: “*Maybe Hagrid*

*got himself badly injured by messing with stuff that's too big for him".* This had hardly made Harry feel any better. It did assure Harry though that Hagrid must have set out to befriend the giants for the Order and that Malfoy knew more about it than he was letting on.

Malfoy had been acting odd lately. He continued his usual taunts about Harry and his friends but whenever something was mentioned about Voldemort he would flinch or pale even more than usual. Harry wasn't sure what was going on there but he wondered if Lucius Malfoy was having a certain Dark Lord over as a dinner guest or something. Whatever it was, it definitely was making Malfoy very uncomfortable.

Ancient Runes class had been interesting and Harry had been surprised when Professor O'Bryan had asked him to stay behind. Once the class had emptied out, he approached her desk.

"What's going on, Professor?"

She smiled warmly at him. "Nothing very much, I just happened to hear about your little outburst in Umbridge's class."

Harry nodded. "Oh."

She grinned. "And say good job! She needs a personality check."

Harry laughed. "Thanks."

"No problem. I also wanted to mention that you did phenomenal on your presentation. I think you explained your points well and made it interesting. My third years were very impressed."

"Thank you."

She smiled at him. "Since you helped me out too, I'll let you know that your quiz was well-done. You were two questions shy of perfect, only Miss Granger managed a higher mark. I was very impressed. I'm hoping that this year continues on just as well."

Harry grinned. "Thanks, Professor, and I hope it does too. I really like



this class.”

O'Bryan smiled. “Good. Now why don't you head down to dinner, I'll see you in class.”

“Alright, thanks again.”

He had left her office with a huge grin on his face. It felt good to know that at least two professors (O'Bryan and McGonagall) already hated Umbridge.

Harry's first detention with Umbridge was terrible – worse then even he had imagined it. She wanted him to write lines – **I must not tell lies** – but with a special quill of hers. The quill sliced the words into the back of his hand and the writing on the page came out in his own blood. He had gasped in surprise when the first word sliced through but when he noticed her pleased smile he was determined not to make another sound. When he left that first evening the back of his hand was red and raw but the words couldn't be seen on his hand. She kept giving him an incredible evil smile as if she was waiting for him to report her, daring him to do it. Harry ignored her and decided after the first night of detentions that he wasn't going to tell anyone about what was really going on.

By the end of the week, the words were scratched lightly on the back of his hand as if they would scar. His hand was killing him and he was finding himself having trouble doing his homework because he couldn't write. Because of his detention, Harry had been forced to miss the new Keeper tryouts for Gryffindor, Angelina was not pleased. Ron made Keeper – though Angelina did say repeatedly that he wasn't fabulous – and Harry was glad to know that she was giving him a chance mostly because he came from a family of great Quidditch players.

Harry wrote a quick letter to James, telling him that he had been having a really crappy week. Remembering to make sure he didn't write anything incriminating in the letter, it was brief and simple. He headed up to the owlery the next morning to give it to Hedwig. To his surprise, he found Cho there. He sent Hedwig off with the letter before he turned to her.

“Hi Harry.”

He smiled at her. “Hi Cho, how are you?”

“I’m alright. Sending an early letter?”

“Yeah, you?”

She nodded. “I only just remembered that it’s my mum’s birthday.”

He nodded. “I see. Well, I better head down to breakfast, I’ll see you later.” Just as he was about to leave, Filch filled the doorway.

“Aha! I caught you! Now give me that order form for Dungbombs!”

Harry looked at him in confusion. “Dungbombs? I didn’t order any Dungbombs!”

Filch shook his head. “Like I’m going to believe that! Give me the letter!”

Harry grinned. “Too late, I already sent it!”

“Liar!” Filch shrieked.

“No!” Cho exclaimed suddenly. “I saw him send it.”

Filch glared at her. “Are you sure?”

Cho nodded. “Yes.”

Filch sighed and left the room muttering to his cat.

Harry turned to Cho and grinned. “Thanks. I wonder why he thought that I was ordering Dungbombs.”

She shrugged. “I don’t know.”

He nodded. “Well, I got to go but I’ll talk to you later. Bye.”

He left the owlery wondering again why Filch was so suspicious of him. He felt his mirror heat up in his pocket. He quickly ducked into a broom closet, locked the door and put a silencing charm on it before he pulled out the mirror. He grinned when he saw his father's face.

"Da! Am I glad to see you."

James grinned. "Bad week?"

Harry nodded. "Terrible!" He quickly explained about everything that had happened and how Umbridge was making him write lines, though he didn't say anything about the quill.

James nodded. "Yeah, I heard. Minerva's been keeping me posted. She also told me about the animagi lessons. Listen, we need a new location to meet, right? I know that I told you I would give you two weeks but I'd like to meet this Sunday if you don't mind."

"I don't mind at all! I need something to keep my mind off of everything!"

"Good. Alright, this is what I need you to do. Use the cloak to get into the tunnel that leads to Honeydukes. Padfoot will be waiting there for you as Snuffles. Once you get right beneath the trap door he's going to side apparate you to his house for the afternoon. Got it?" James explained.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, that sounds good to me."

James grinned. "Alright, listen I got to go, but I'll see you on Sunday. Be under the trap door by eleven a.m.?"

"Got it. See you later, Da."

When his face disappeared from the mirror, Harry could only sigh. He headed down to the Great Hall for breakfast and whispered to Ginny, Ron, and Hermione that his first lesson would be on Sunday and then he told them about what had happened with Cho.

Hermione sighed. "I think that she wants you back or something. I mean, why else would she be so friendly with you now?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know. I have no idea why she's been going out of her way to talk to me and stuff. I think it's weird."

Ginny grinned and kissed him softly. "Well, she can't have you now, can she?"

Harry grinned down at her. "I don't want her. I want you. I dated her and it was a disaster which is why I don't understand what's going on."

Ginny kissed him again. "She'll make it known to you eventually. Come on, I have homework to do and so do you."

Harry groaned. "Did you have to remind me?"

"Um Harry," Ron replied. "I was wondering if you would mind going out to the pitch a little early with me just so that I could practice a bit before the team comes out."

Harry nodded. "Sure Ron, practice is at noon, right?"

Ron nodded. "Yeah."

"Alright, well, we'll go out around ten thirty, sound good?"

Ron grinned. "Thanks mate, I owe you one."

Harry grinned. "Sure do. Alright, let's go do homework."

Ginny laughed and kissed him softly. "You know you want to."

He laughed. "Yeah, it's my goal in life." Then he pulled her close and silenced her giggles with a kiss.

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## Chapter 33: Elementals

**Author's Notes:** Please review!!

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### Chapter XXXIII – Elementals

Harry's hand was still a little red and sore by Sunday morning but no one could really tell what it was. It looked more like a rash that he had been scratching than anything else. He still wasn't sure why he was keeping it a secret from everyone but he felt like by telling someone Umbridge would win this game that she was playing with him. When he had finally left her office Friday evening she had only tapped his hand with an evil smile and said something about him learning his lesson. He only hoped that he could hold his temper in check with her during the next class.

He spent the morning catching up on all of the homework that he had missed because he had been in detention and then his hand had been too sore to do it. His hand still hurt when he wrote but it wasn't as bad as before. Ginny sat down next to him and gave him a sweet smile.

"Still working?"

He nodded. "Yeah, I'm a little behind. I'm almost done though I just have an essay for Snape and an essay for O'Bryan and then I've finally caught up."

Ginny grinned. "But then you have to leave."

He leaned over and kissed her softly. "I should be back for dinner or by later tonight anyway. I have no idea how long they will keep me working."

She nodded. "If you don't get back too late, want to work on our transformations?"

"Yeah, that sounds good."

She smiled. "Great! Well, Colin, Dee, Luna, and I are going outside for a walk. I'll talk to you later." She kissed him goodbye before she left through the portrait hole, leaving Harry watching her go.

By the time ten thirty rolled around, Harry was anxious to leave. He put all of his books away and went up to his dormitory to get his map and his invisibility cloak. He muttered a goodbye to Ron and Hermione before he headed towards the passage that led to Honeydukes. The walk was longer then he remembered and when he finally arrived under the trapdoor he grinned when he recognized Snuffles.

Sirius changed back into himself and grinned. "Hey, just in time! Alright, I need you to hold onto me tightly now, okay?"

Harry nodded. He held onto Sirius' arms as he turned a bit and then a rush of noise brushed past him and he found himself standing in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place. "Hey!"

James grinned from the table where he was drinking his tea. "Hey! No problems getting there?"

Harry shook his head. "Nope no problems."

Remus smiled. "Well, then I guess you two better get started?"

The two of them moved into the library as it seemed to be the biggest room and probably the best place for practicing. Sirius and Remus stayed in the kitchen as this was really something that they couldn't help out with.

"Alright," James began. "Now, so far when it comes to elemental magic I've told you about how this power comes through you and we've worked on doing every spell, charm, and curse that you've ever learned wandlessly. Have you been working on learning anything new in school wandlessly as well?"

Harry sighed. "No, but I've been in detention all week and I barely had enough time to finish my homework."

“Harry, you’ve got to make sure you try to fit it in, alright.”

Harry nodded. “I’ll work on the new charms and spells I learned this week as soon as I get back, I promise.”

James grinned. “Good. Now that you have mastered all of that we’re moving to the next step, which is a big one. The next step is creating elementals.”

“Creating them?” Harry asked.

James nodded. He pointed his hand at the ground next to him. “Come hither.” A flash of blue light, two flashes of green light, two flashes of red light, and one flash of yellow light appeared next to him. The flashes were so fast that if you weren’t looking for them you wouldn’t have seen them. “Show yourself.” The flashes turned into animals. The blue flash turned into a clown fish that was swimming in what looked to be a perfectly square area of water; the two flashes of green light turned into a mouse and a stag; the two flashes of red light turned into a phoenix and a baby dragon; and the flash of yellow light turned into a canary.

“Wow,” Harry replied.

James grinned. “These are my elementals, Harry. I can produce six. One of Water and one of Air but I can produce two of Earth and two of Fire, this means that Earth and Fire are my strongest elements. We’ve already determined that Water would be your weakest element and Earth your strongest. Air and Fire are pretty evenly matched I think for you. Of course we won’t know for sure until we actually work on creating them yourself. That’s just what I assumed by the forms that have chosen you for your animagi. Now, by saying ‘Come hither’ I called forth all of my elementals at once. Elementals can only be seen by the person who cast them unless specifically requested as I did to show you. Unless one is looking for them then they might be see the quick flashes of light but one would have to know what they were looking for. Now if I wanted to only call forth one of my elementals, I would call them forth by name.”

“Like Earth, Air, Water, Fire?”

“You could, however, what if I only wanted one of my elementals? But I clearly have two Earth and two Fire, then how do I call forth the one that I want?”

Harry shrugged. “No clue.”

James grinned. “By name. The first thing that must be done after you create your elemental is to name him or her. My canary is named Aldora. It is a Greek name meaning ‘winged gift’. My mouse is named Adam. It is English for ‘earth’. My stag is named Ailward. It is English for ‘noble guard’. My dragon is named Fiammetta. It is Italian for ‘little fire’. My phoenix is named Fina. It is Italian for ‘burning one’. My clown fish is named Dour. It is Scottish meaning ‘from the water’. Now tell me, what do you get out of my names?”

Harry thought for a moment before he spoke. “Well, it’s obvious that your mouse, stag, and fish are male elementals and the rest are female?”

James nodded. “Yes, that’s right. Technically, an elemental isn’t male or female but more of a spirit. However, once the elemental reverts into an animal form it takes on a gender role.”

“So how did you choose the names? Did you look up names that fit closely with the animal form and the elemental?” Harry asked.

“I didn’t have too. The first thing that you will learn about your elementals is that once the animal form has been made, that is now who and what they are. They name themselves.”

“You can communicate with them?”

James nodded. “I can speak with them psychically. Tell them to do things and they will answer in my mind. No one else can hear what they say or what I tell them to do. I can call them forth in my mind and they would appear. In fact, when it comes to controlling the elementals you don’t have to speak at all.”

“Wow.”



“Big wow. Alright, now why don’t we start back at the beginning and then we’ll come back to this. Think back to the story that I told you about how the Potter family came to possess such power. Are there any questions that you might be wondering about in that sense?” James asked.

Harry nodded. “Well, alright I do have one question. Before you said that my owl would be qualified as an element of Air; my phoenix of Fire; and my wolf and lion of Earth and that those would be my strong elements and Water my weakest. But if I can’t produce a Water form in an animagi then how can I even control Water at all?”

James grinned. “That’s a good question, Harry. You will still be able to control the element because it runs through your blood from Bricia Ravenclaw. The power is there, even if it isn’t as strong as say your Earth elements. Here let me give you an example. Divination is by far your worst subject to date and Defence Against the Dark Arts is your best. Now just because your grades aren’t as high in Divination as they are in DADA does that mean that you can’t possibly pass Divination or complete any of the work?”

Harry nodded. “I see where you’re going with this. The knowledge is there I just have to figure out what to do with it.”

“Exactly. Now I know that I reviewed them briefly before but the first thing that you need to know is that you must learn about each element.” He snapped his fingers and his six elementals disappeared. “Let’s start with Earth, what do you know about Earth?”

Harry shrugged. “We live on it. It’s the ground and the sky and the plants and the animals. It’s the source of life, I guess, because it is on Earth where Air, Fire, and Water reside?”

James grinned. “Yes it is. But Earth has many other qualities as well. Okay, what about Fire?”

“Well, it’s hot and it provides warmth. It can also be very lethal.”

“Good, the basic qualities are something that you should think about.

Fire is all of those things, but again, it has other qualities as well. What about Air?"

"Well, Air is what we breathe. It's the wind and the breeze and it's always around us." Harry explained.

James smiled. "True, Air is always there even when we can't feel it. And Water?"

Harry grinned. "It's wet and it always looks green or blue or black in case of the Black Lake at Hogwarts. It also is like another world because when you dive beneath the surface there are so many different things below it, different animals, different plants, and even a different look."

James grinned. "Exactly. Here is a description of each element and the things that you need to memorize. It is important that you know and understand this at least until you've managed to create an elemental."

Harry nodded. He took the parchment from his father. It read:

## **EARTH:**

- *Formative and strong*
- *Direction of North when called upon*
- *Strongest places to be in when calling upon Earth – caves, mountains, forests, tunnels, and deserts*
- *Colours of black, brown, and green*
- *Energy bases of stones, sand, crystals, clay, and salt*
- *Earth energy is the most valuable in healing magic*
- *Earth is the counterbalance to Air because it is the foundation of all life*
- *An Earth element can control earthquake, famine, rain, drought, frost, snow, hail, sleet, fog, and other forms of natural environmental hazards*
- *Earth is also the keeper of Knowledge and can be used to gain control of the environment*
- *Healing abilities: arms, bones, feet, hands, legs, skin, teeth*

## **FIRE:**

- *Transforming, energetic, strong emotions*
- *Hot devouring power of the most intense emotions – anger, lust, love, passion, sex, and light*
- *Direction of South when called upon*
- *Strongest places to be in when calling upon Fire – volcanoes, earth's core, deserts*
- *Colours of red and orange*
- *Energy bases of light – sunlight*
- *Fire energy is most valuable in light and revealing the truth to the beholder*
- *A contained flame is the most valuable as it is not out of control as fire can be destructive and destroy everything in its path*
- *Fire energy can also be used to metaphysically detect things which produce heat, and can focus the heat into a physical manifestation of the flame itself, thus creating pure flame from seemingly nothing.  
(This goes back to the original elemental magic that most witches and wizards can do such as making fire)*
- *Healing abilities: abdomen, genitalia, heart, mind*

## **AIR:**

- *Moving, psychic, communicating*
- *Direction of East when called upon*
- *Strongest places to be in when calling upon Air – windswept hills, towers, mountain peaks*
- *Colours of yellow and white*
- *Air energy is not as overpowering as other elements – wind*
- *Most powerful during a storm – lightning charges the air which would increase its power*
- *Air is the energy of intellect, wisdom, and understanding and can help communication and friendship*
- *Wind constantly moves, constantly changes – but Air is still the easiest element to control*
- *Healing abilities: blood, chest, lungs, nose, throat*

## **WATER:**

- *Soothing, relaxing, deals with feelings and emotions*

- *Direction of West when called upon*
- *Strongest places to be in when calling upon Water – oceans, rivers, lakes, bogs, pools, swamps, marshes, streams and rainforests*
- *Colour of blue*
- *Water energy can easily be obtained through even a puddle or a water faucet*
- *Water energy is strongest during a storm because of the ocean churning and charging the energy*
- *Water is most valuable for its reflections and psychic powers*
- *Water energy can be used for dreaming, prophecy, divination, and cleansing the spirits*
- *Healing abilities: ears, eyes, stomach, uterus*

Harry finished reading and looked up at James. “This all seems simple and almost superficial?”

James nodded. “It may sound so but everything listed above is important. Now some of it may sound corny but it’s so as not to alarm you when you use each element.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, think about it this way. By knowing that Water comes from the general direction of west, when you use the element and it comes at you, by knowing where its coming from it helps a bit. It makes it less ... alarming, I suppose. And the feelings, such as Fire is transforming, energetic, and ignites strong emotions – that’s what you’re going to feel when the element comes to you and when you create the elements themselves.” James explained.

Harry nodded. “Wow! This is a lot more complicated then every day magic.”

James grinned. “Well, you’re learning how to control the powers of a goddess and the elementals are magic within themselves. Any other questions?”

“Well, I remember you mentioning them before but now that they are actually listed here ... where it says healing abilities and then lists things like ears, eyes, arms, legs, etc, what do you mean by that?”

James grinned. "It means that you can heal wounds or problems with your elementals. For example, the Fire element means that you can heal the heart, mind, abdomen, etc so basically that means that any type of heart problem, mind problem, or any type of problem involving the abdomen you can call forth your Fire element to heal it."

"Neat. So I can heal anything and everything?"

"Pretty much yeah, but like anything there are exceptions. For instance, Alice and Frank Longbottom were tortured into insanity. I've been trying to use my Fire elements to heal their minds now for many years but they're too far gone and there's nothing that I can do about it. I don't have that kind of power." James explained, his eyes looking far away for a moment before he caught himself. "But in most cases you can heal simple things. Like when I went and got you from the Dursleys and your hands were cut up and bleeding, remember I healed those cuts and made them disappear quickly. That was my elementals. I may have had my wand out, but the power was coming from my elementals. But the welts on your back, I couldn't fully heal those no matter how hard I tried but I healed them enough that you only have a few small scars on your back, hardly noticeable unless one is looking closely."

Harry nodded but his mind had drawn back to the way that Uncle Vernon had beat him with the bat and with the belt, over and over again as his skin had screamed. He jumped when an arm draped over his shoulders.

"Harry?"

He shook the memories from his mind. "I'm alright. So, you can heal people then?"

James watched his son for a moment and then he nodded, leaning down to place a kiss on Harry's forehead. "Yes."

"I have another question. Um, when the list here mentions energy – Earth energy, Fire energy, Water energy, and Air energy – I'm not sure I'm following."

James smiled. "The energy is simply when you can use the elemental and when it will be strongest. You can call forth an elemental to do your bidding any time you want but each elemental is strongest at a certain time. Air and Water are most powerful during a storm. Fire can also be very powerful during a storm but it needs to be contained as wild fire is uncontrollable and can lead to destruction. Earth is the most powerful whenever because it is the basis of life itself. Now that's not saying that you can't use the elements during other times, it's simply saying that that's when your element will be the strongest."

Harry nodded. "I see. Okay, so when this list here talks about Earth being good for healing and Water being good for dreams and prophecy and divination and all that stuff – what does that mean?"

"That means that when you use that particular element, those skills will increase. Now Water is your weakest element so I doubt that you will have prophetic dreams but it might help increase your skills in divination. The healing part means that your healing powers are strongest with Earth because Earth is the healing element." James explained.

"Has anyone in our family ever had prophetic dreams?"

"Aye, I think so. I think my great-great-great-grandmother used to have them. It's a very rare gift in anybody and seers are hard to find. So I doubt that you will obtain that skill. I've never figured out how to use it and I don't think I'd want too. I'd rather live in the present than in the future." James said thoughtfully.

"Yeah, me too." Harry replied.

James nodded. "Any other questions?"

"Yeah, the whole Merlin thing – okay, so he gave his powers to his daughter Zaira upon his death, right?"

"Yes."

"Well, what kind of powers did Merlin have? I mean, was he an

elemental too?" Harry asked.

James shook his head. "No, Merlin was nothing of the sort. He was simply an extremely powerful wizard. His magic was incredibly strong and incredibly powerful. Dumbledore has been compared to Merlin in power but no one else ever has. By having his blood in you it simply increases your magical power I suppose. He was magnificent. Even muggles know all sorts of stories about Merlin and Arthur. There are so many different variations of what happened and how it happened that few wizards even know the true story. Muggles believe it to be a story or that time in history where they accepted and believed in magic."

Harry nodded. "I see. What about the thing with having Gryffindor and Ravenclaw, and for me, Slytherin's powers in my possession?"

"Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Slytherin, and Hufflepuff were the four greatest witches and wizards of the age. So again, it's more of the power idea, though if you remember, we obtained the Water element from Bricia Ravenclaw, years before Rowena Ravenclaw existed and the Fire element from the daughter of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw. When it comes to Slytherin, I have no idea what to expect, Harry. Dumbledore assumes that you received some of Voldemort's skill and powers when he tried to kill you and since he is the heir of Slytherin that would make you have some of Slytherin's powers as well. However, we're not sure what those might be so we'll just have to go with the flow and see how everything works out."

"Alright, I can go with that."

James grinned. "Good. Do you have any more questions?"

"No, I think that's everything for now."

"Good. Why don't we get some lunch and then we'll start working on creating your own elementals?"

Harry grinned. He was anxious to actually start and to see how it worked. "Brilliant!"

They went into the kitchen where Dobby and Winky had created a delicious lunch of pizza with extra cheese, green peppers, mushrooms, pepperoni, bacon, and ham. Harry knew that Sirius had probably requested it as Dobby and Winky would not normally make pizza.

“So, how’s the lesson going?” Sirius asked.

Harry shrugged. “We haven’t really started yet. There was lots of explanation first.”

James grinned. “It’s not my fault. There’s a lot to know.”

Remus grinned. “How’s school going? James mentioned that you said something about a crappy week?”

Harry nodded. “Umbridge is terrible! I lost my temper with her and basically called the ministry liars and her a liar and screamed out that Voldemort was back. I got one week worth of detentions.”

“What did you have to do?” Sirius asked.

“Just write lines. ‘I must not tell lies’ over and over again until she said I could go. I missed the Keeper tryouts too. But Ron made Keeper for Gryffindor so that’s good news.” Harry explained.

Remus nodded. “Lines aren’t bad.”

“No, it was okay.”

He reached for another slice of pizza when James grabbed his arm. “Hey, what’s that on the back of your hand?”

Harry’s eyes fell to the redness on the back of his hand. “I’m not sure. I think it’s a rash or something. It’s been pretty itchy. I’ll get Madam Pomfrey to take a look at it when I go back to school.”

James nodded. “You better. That looks painful.”

Harry shrugged. “I’ll handle it, don’t worry.”



Sirius helped himself to more pizza and grinned. "So how are things going with Gorgeous?"

Harry grinned. "Ginny? It's all going good."

Sirius grinned back. "Define good."

"It's going great, alright." Harry replied with a grin. "I haven't managed to spend too much time with her this week because I got detention and then I was really far behind on my homework. But I promised her tonight that I would help her, Ron, and Hermione with the animagus lessons." Harry explained. "Oh, speaking of, McGonagall's going to help me again. She says that she's anxious to see the wolf and I managed to change my right arm too."

James grinned. "Brilliant."

Sirius nodded. "Yeah, James here just told us last week that he can become a raven and a panther as well. We told him that he was a git for keeping that a secret for so long."

Remus nodded. "Like we cared that he could become three animals and we couldn't, but whatever, as Lily used to always say – ego James, ego!"

James grinned. "Alright, so I was a git. Well, now you guys know and I've been working on the raven, but I haven't come up with anything yet."

They looked up when they heard a crash in the entrance hall. Sirius chuckled. "Hey Tonks!"

Tonks stepped into the room, her hair was still short and bubble gum pink. "Sorry about that. Hey Harry, didn't expect to see you here."

He grinned. "Hi Tonks." This time he made sure to look closely at Tonks and Remus and he knew that there were some definite sparks flying between those two. "What brings you here?"

“Actually, I just spoke to Kingsley and I guess he recruited another Order member.” Tonks explained.

Remus nodded. “Oh yeah, who?”

“Someone named Alexis O’Bryan. She’s apparently an Ancient Runes teacher at Hogwarts. She’s really young too, older than me of course, but I think she’s twenty-six. Youngest professor there. I remember her from when I was at Hogwarts.”

“Yeah, I have her. She’s a good professor. Actually, she congratulated me on telling Umbridge off. I don’t think too many of the professors like her. So she’s in the Order now?” Harry asked.

Tonks nodded. “Yeah, Kingsley wanted me to pass her some papers or something but I have no idea how I’m supposed to do that.”

James grinned. “Harry can give them to her. After all, it would simply look like he was handing in an assignment.”

Tonks grinned. “Good idea, James. You don’t mind do you, Harry?”

Harry shook his head. “No, what are the papers for?”

“Just some basic things that she needs to know. No one will be able to read the papers except for the person their destined to but just in case, make sure that no one sees them, okay?” James replied.

Harry nodded. “Okay. Have you guys heard anything else from Voldemort?”

James shook his head. “No, he’s laying low and it worries us all that he seems to be hiding.”

Sirius nodded. “It’s worse this way because we don’t know what his next move is going to be.”

“How old do you have to be to join the Order anyway? Because I think –”

“NO!” James exploded, his eyes flashing angrily. “You are not joining the Order. Not until you are seventeen years old and even then I would prefer that you were out of school.”

Harry sighed. “But Da, that’s not fair! I mean, I’ve been through a lot on my own as well and it was me that saw Voldemort come back in June!”

James nodded. “I don’t care. You’re only fifteen years old!”

“What does that have to do with anything?”

“It has to do with everything! You’re my son and I don’t want anything to happen to you! It’s fucking bad enough that Voldemort is after you, let alone putting you in more danger! And by working for the Order that’s exactly what would be happening!”

Harry glared at his father. “Well, you’re in the Order!”

“I’m an adult!”

Sirius stepped between them and placed his hands on their shoulders. “Guys come on, this is ridiculous! Harry, James doesn’t want you in the Order because first of all, no one is denying what you’ve done, but you’re not of age. And until you are of age you’ve got no say in this. We’ve been lenient and we’ve told you as much as we could about what’s going on and how everything is going with the Order and you know who a lot of the members are. That’s more then you really should know.”

Remus nodded. “We assumed that you were mature enough to handle being informed even when you weren’t allowed to participate. Are we going to have to regret that decision?”

Harry stared up at them and then he sighed. They had all ganged up on him. “No. I’m sorry. It’s just that I want to help! I don’t want to sit around and do nothing!”

James nodded. “I understand that, Harry, but there’s nothing that you can do at the moment. You’re not equipped enough to fight either.

You've been lucky. We have to work on those lessons and you need to finish school. The day you turn seventeen I promise that you can join the Order, even though you won't be finished school. Fair?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, that's fair."

James grinned. "Good. Now you can deliver those papers to Alexis O'Bryan when you return to school. For now, let's go back to the library, alright?"

"Alright." Harry said goodbye to Tonks, Remus, and Sirius before he followed his father back into the library. When James closed the door Harry spoke up. "Da, I'm sorry."

James nodded. "Me too. Come on, it's time for you to create an elemental."

Harry nodded. "Alright, so how do I do this?"

"Alright, let's start with the Earth element as I believe that will be your strongest. Now, creating the elemental is the easy part and I think we will manage to bring all of your elementals forward today. It will be controlling them that we will need to work on later. So first things first, when you think of an Earth animal, what's the first creature that pops into your mind?" James asked.

"Dog, then wolf, panther, lion."

James nodded. "Alright. Well, those are good animals. Now those are Earth animals, which you know. This is what I want you to do, concentrate on the Earth element, remember that it will come from the North. Earth's colours are black, brown, and green. I want you to picture in your mind, a ball of light in one of those colours. Visualize it in your mind and imagine a perfectly circular ball of that light appearing in the palm of your hand."

Harry closed his eyes and pictured that deep green light that he had seen appear out of his father's fingertips. He imagined that light, using his mind to meld the light into a circle. Once the image was clearly in his mind he began to try to picture it standing in the palm of

his hand, glowing. He felt a strong energy flow through his blood as if it was determining what he was doing. The magic rippled and then he felt it, the sparkling energy and tingly feeling radiating out of the palm of his hand and when he looked down there was a ball of green light. But not only one ball – there were three balls of green light.

“Wow.”

James nodded. “Wow – those three balls means that you can produce three Earth elementals. Now concentrate on those lights, will them to become Earth animals and they will take the forms they possess.”

Harry concentrated his energy on the three balls of green light. He remembered the different animals that had been listed under the Earth element and as he remembered each one, the light began to change from green to black to brown and back to green and then the lights grew. The lights grew bigger and bigger until they were sitting on the ground in front of Harry, flashing the three different colours over and over again until they stopped and turned into a black wolf, a black panther, and a golden lion. The three animals stared up at him in awe.

“Wow.”

James grinned. “Yes wow. I knew that you could do. Now close your eyes and think of something, try to talk to them in your mind. Ask them what their names are.”

Harry closed his eyes and concentrated. He pictured the wolf clearly in his mind and asked what his name was, as he instinctively knew that he was male. Then a rough response appeared in his mind and he knew that the wolf had answered.

*My name is Koun. My name is Celtic meaning ‘hound’. I am ready to serve you, Master Potter.*

Harry grinned at the wolf. “It is nice to meet you, Koun.” He replied out loud before turning to the panther.

*My name is Mogens. My name is Dutch meaning 'power'. I am ready to serve you, Master Potter.*

Harry nodded at the panther before turning to the lion.

*My name is Armand. My name is Polish meaning 'soldier'. I am ready to serve you, Master Potter.*

Harry nodded once more before turning his attention back to his father. "Koun is the wolf; Mogens is the panther; and Armand is the lion."

James grinned. "Excellent. Now dismiss them and call them back by name."

In his mind, Harry asked them to leave and then he called upon Armand to return. The lion appeared next to him, willing and waiting and he grinned.

James smiled. "These are your Earth elementals. They will do anything you ask of them. Protect anyone you ask of them. They can help you fight battles and protect you when necessary. Let's move onto Fire. Creating the elementals won't be hard; it's learning how to control them which you will need to work on. Dismiss Armand and we will move onto Fire. Because Harry, you've got a hell of a lot to learn."

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## Chapter 34: Umbridge and O'Bryan

**Author's Notes:** Please review!! thank to peskypetunia for my water element and thanks to a few ppl who have always referred to Umbridge as Umbitch - its suits!!

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## Chapter XXXIV – Umbridge and O'Bryan

By the time that Harry returned to Hogwarts that evening he had

managed to create and to bring forth all of his elementals. Other than his three male Earth elementals of Koun the wolf, Mogens the panther, and Armand the lion, he had also brought forth three Fire: a male phoenix named Aodh which was Celtic meaning 'fire'; a male serpent named Borvo which was Celtic meaning 'heat'; and a female baby dragon named Candlearia which was Spanish meaning 'candle'. Two of Air: a female raven named Céleste which was French meaning 'heavenly'; and a male eagle named Arn which was English meaning 'eagle power'. And he did only succeed in making one Water elemental: a female shark named Marninella which was Italian meaning 'of the sea'.

He had learned something interesting out of it all though: when his raven had appeared as his Air elemental his Da had informed him that a raven was the animagus form of his mother. Harry had never even known that Lily had learned how to become an animagus. James had explained to him that he had taught her in their seventh year and that she had mastered it right after Harry had been born. She of course, had registered her form. It made him feel good to know that his parents were such a part of him that he used both of their animagus forms in his magic – his stag patronous for his father and his raven Air elemental for his mother.

Once all nine of his elementals had been created James had told him to use them to do small things for the rest of the week. He wanted them to get used to Harry and for Harry to get used to them. He suggested having them maybe grab him some foods from the kitchens, collecting books or parchment from his room etc. Apparently by doing this, he would be exercising control over his elementals and this control would come in handy in the long run. James had also reminded him that he needed to practice the new spells that he was learning wandlessly.

When he returned to the Gryffindor common room he had enough time to throw his cloak and map in his trunk before he headed down to dinner. He took a seat at the table, a little disappointed when he didn't see Ginny. He helped himself to some dinner and grinned up at Neville when he took a seat next to him.

"Hey, Harry."

“Hi Neville, what’s up?”

Neville shrugged as he helped himself to some of the perch in front of him. “Nothing much. I’ve been doing homework all day, you?”

“Same.”

“It bites! Can you believe how much work we’ve gotten already? I mean, I knew O.W.L. year was going to be hard but this is almost ridiculous!”

Harry nodded. “I agree. Hey, have you seen Ginny?”

Neville shook his head. “No, I haven’t seen her in a few hours. Last I heard she was going to the library with Colin, Demelza, and Luna. She’s probably still there.”

Harry nodded. “Thanks. I’ll head there if she doesn’t come to dinner before I’m done. We had made plans for later.”

Neville grinned, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively. “Snogging plans.”

Harry laughed. “Possibly. Hey, you’re not offended by me dating Gin, are you? ‘Cause I remember that you took her to the Yule Ball last year and all?”

Neville shook his head. “Oh no, not at all! I think that you two are perfect for each other. Ginny and I only went to the ball as friends. I mean, don’t get me wrong she’s really pretty, but I don’t like her that way.”

Harry grinned. “Good. No offence.”

Neville only grinned back. “None taken.”

Harry turned at the sound of his name and grinned at Ron as he took a seat next to him. “Hey, been doing prefect duty?”



Ron nodded. "It's incredibly stressful. Not to mention working with Hermione. She wants me to have a talk with Fred and George about this joke shop thing and having students testing their products. Can you imagine what those two would do to me if I even tried that?"

Harry laughed. "Good luck with that one, mate!"

Ron only rolled his eyes as he began to pile his plate up with food. "So how did today go?"

"Really well actually. I made nine."

Ron's eyes widened in surprise. "Nine of those ... things that your da said you could do?"

Harry nodded, carefully lowering his voice so that only Ron could hear him. "Elementals Ron, and yes."

"Wow. Can you show us?"

"Yeah, I will later. Hey, Gin and I were talking earlier about me um ... teaching you guys later tonight, are you up for it?"

Ron looked confused for a minute and then he nodded. "Yeah for sure. Right after dinner?"

"Yeah, I just have to find Ginny first."

Ron nodded. They both finished up their meal before Harry took off towards the library and Ron headed up to the common room to fill Hermione in on the plan.

Harry stepped into the library and noticed Ginny's cap of bright red hair seated at a table in the far corner. Her head was close to Colin's as if they were discussing some great secret. Luna and Demelza were sitting across from them. Harry made his way over to them and took a seat next to Ginny.

"Hello everyone."

Ginny turned to grin at him before she kissed him softly. "Hi."

Colin gave them a cheeky grin. "Hey! Don't you know the rules? No snogging in the library!"

Ginny laughed and elbowed him playfully. "Git. You're just jealous because you don't have a snogging partner."

Colin grinned. "Sad but true. But I'm hoping to cure myself of this ailment if Mandy Brocklehurst will ever go out with me."

"Ugh, Colin no! She's such a bitch. She's so not worthy of your time." Demelza replied.

Ginny nodded. "I agree with Dee. She's not nice to anyone."

Colin pouted. "But she's gorgeous."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "That's hardly a good enough reason to want to go out with her. Looks aren't everything, you know."

Luna tucked her wand behind her ear before glancing over at Colin. "Looking only at face value is very shallow. That could be the reason why you don't have a girlfriend."

Ginny and Demelza snickered. "Good one, Luna."

Colin glared at them. "Sometimes I wonder why I hang around you three."

Ginny laughed as she hugged him tight and kissed his cheek. "Because you love us. But I'm off, snogging duty calls. Talk to you guys later."

"Snogging duty?" Harry asked with a grin.

Ginny laughed. "Oh right, sorry, snogging pleasure calls. Bye guys." She waved goodbye to her friends before walking hand in hand out of the library with Harry. As soon as they turned the corridor, she grinned at him. "Now I can give you a proper kiss hello."

Harry grinned. "I was wondering if you would get around to that."

He pinned her back against the wall, sliding her bag off her shoulder and slipping his arms around her waist. He stared into her eyes, grinning at her as he slid his hands up her slender back to untie the elastic band in her hair. As the curls the colour of wild fire fell into his hands he moved in closer. He could feel her warm breath on his lips as he ran his tongue along her bottom lip. Ginny slipped her arms around his neck, curling her fingers into the hair at the nape of his neck. He leaned down and pressed his lips softly to hers.

The soft kisses that the two of them had been sneaking back and forth in between classes and in the mornings had hardly been enough. But with Harry's detentions and the huge pile of homework neither one of them had managed to find time for each other. Now, as their lips met softly, that explosion of emotion that they had first felt that day in the garden returned.

Harry nibbled gently at her lips, teasing her until her lips parted so that he could use his tongue. She moaned when he deepened the kiss and pressed herself closer. His hands ran through her silky hair and she could only sigh. This was what she had been missing all week and this was what she had needed. His lips on hers as he held her close, those rough calloused hands in her hair. She dragged her fingers through his already messy black hair, enjoying the soft texture and the way that he leaned closer as if he couldn't get enough of her. He was everything that she had ever dreamed of. She stood on her toes as she wrapped her arms tighter around him just as she heard a loud cough from behind Harry. They broke apart and turned around, both of them flushing when they noticed McGonagall standing there.

"Mr. Potter, Miss Weasley, there are rules about public displays of affection in the corridors."

Harry nodded. "Sorry Professor."

McGonagall gave them a quick smile. "I bet you're sorry. Don't let it happen again. Go on up to the common room now."

They nodded. Harry picked up Ginny's bag and swung it onto his shoulder before he reached for her hand and they headed back up to the common room. When they walked through the portrait hole Ron hurried over.

"What took you so long?" When they didn't answer fast enough he rolled his eyes. "Bloody hell, were you snogging again?"

Harry grinned. "Maybe. Come on, let me just get my cloak and then we'll go into a passage way to practice, okay?"

They all nodded. Harry hurried upstairs to get the map and his cloak. He quickly enlarged the cloak in his dormitory before heading back down to his friends. They headed out, using a deserted corridor to cover themselves and then headed into the passage way near Honeydukes. Harry figured that that was the best place to practice. Once they arrived, Harry grinned at them.

"Alright, well, first I'll share my news with you two since Ron already knows. But I created nine elementals today."

Hermione gasped. "Wow Harry! That's amazing! So can you ever create any more?"

Harry shook his head. "No, see Da had me do each element at a time and he says that you only do it once and if you have more than one elemental for that element then they will all appear. So I have three Earth, three Fire, two Air, and one Water."

Ginny grinned. "That's so neat. Can you show us?"

Harry nodded. "I think so. Da says that now that I can create them my job is to work on controlling them and seeking them out to do small tasks for me until I get the hang of having them around. Okay, here I go." He held his hands out the way that James had shown him until he was better at it and thought the words: *come hither*. He saw the flashes of green, red, yellow, and blue light appear next to him. He grinned because he knew his friends couldn't see them unless they knew they were there. Again in his mind he spoke to them: *Show yourselves to my friends*.

Ginny gasped as the animals suddenly appeared. "Oh Harry! They're so beautiful!"

Ron was staring at the place where they had just appeared with a look similar to having been hit over the head with a club and Hermione was grinning. "Harry, they are beautiful. So now that you have them – what do you do?"

"Well, technically I am their master, right, because I created them from a ball of power and then Da says that the ball of light veered off into an animal of its own choosing with its own name and everything. It was sort of complicated but I think I got it covered now."

"So what else happened today?" Ginny asked.

Harry began to explain to his friends all about his lesson, including the argument he had gotten into with his father. He also told them about Professor O'Bryan being in the Order now.

"Well, I can see why James wouldn't want you in the Order, Harry; none of us are of age." Hermione replied.

Harry nodded. "I know. It's just frustrating. Anyway, that's pretty much everything that happened." He dismissed his elementals and then turned back to his friends. "Alright, are you ready to start working on the animagus transformation again?"

They nodded and they all got to work. Harry easily changed both of his arms into his wolf's form and then began to try to change his head. He tried not to get too frustrated as none of his friends had managed to change anything yet but they had only had one other lesson. After two hours of nothing, they decided that was enough for the day and Harry tried to tell them not to give up.

They headed back to the common room and Harry grabbed his books and went into a small deserted corner to work on his wandless magic. He had promised that he would work on learning the new stuff as soon as possible. He started with Charms class and as he went through the two new charms that he had learned that week he

realized how much he had improved. He managed to achieve the charm wandlessly on the second try. This told him that his wandless abilities must have improved drastically. Within half an hour he had covered all of the new material. He could only grin and give himself a mental pat on the back.

The next week of school turned out to be just as bad as the first one. After Harry handed over the Order papers to Professor O'Bryan he had been forced to sit through another DADA class with Umbridge and he had naturally lost his temper. She had given him another week's worth of detentions. He had only groaned inwardly at the idea of causing his hand more pain as it was still raw and sore from the week before.

And to everyone's surprise, Ron had received a letter from Percy demanding that he no longer associate himself with Harry. Ron had been so disgusted that he had shredded it before Ginny could read it; but she had gotten the gist of it from those that had. Percy was a real git. Percy had also mentioned something interesting appearing in the *Daily Prophet* the next day. Apparently, Umbridge had been made Hogwarts High Inquisitor which gave her more control over the education system. This did not please anyone.

By the time that Friday rolled around, Harry's hand held the permanent markings of the words: *I must not tell lies*, on the back of his hand. He had tried to hide it as much as he could but Ginny had been the first to discover it when she had been cuddling on his lap Friday evening after his detention. His arms had been wrapped comfortably around her when she had suddenly taken his hands in hers.

"Harry! What the hell is this?" She demanded as she looked at his right hand which was still dripping small drops of blood, red, and raw looking. The words were etched carefully in his own print and was so painful that his hand was numb, which explained why he didn't feel the blood dripping.

"It's nothing, Gin; don't worry about it."

Ginny turned to glare at him. "Don't you lie to me, Harry! What is

this?”

He sighed and snuggled his face gently into the curve of her neck and shoulder. “My detention. I had to write lines remember.”

Ginny gently ran her fingers over his hand. “I don’t understand.”

“It’s something called a Blood Quill – I write the lines on the paper and they etch themselves into the back of my writing hand, the lines appear on the paper written in my own blood.” Harry explained.

Ginny slapped his arm angrily. “Why haven’t you told anyone about this?”

He shrugged. “Because if I tell everyone then it will be like she’s winning.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

He sighed. “It’s almost as if she’s playing a mind game with me, Gin. I sit there and I write lines for hours in my own blood and I refuse to make a sound. She just smiles evilly at me as if daring me to report her. Well, I won’t do it. She’ll get what’s coming to her eventually.”

“You are the stupidest man in the entire world!”

“I – what?”

Ginny nodded. “You heard me! Why on earth are you being such a prat? By telling someone what she’s doing to you isn’t going to make you lose this cock and bull mind game that you seem to think is going on! Really Harry! Blood Quills are illegal!”

Harry sighed. “How come when you say it that way it sounds dumb?”

“Because it is dumb! Has James seen this yet?”

Harry shook his head. “Well, on Sunday my hand was a little red and raw but it just looked like a rash or something. I need to find a way to hide it for Sunday.”

“Oh, you most certainly do not! You make sure that your father sees your hand, Harry! You can’t protect everyone all the time and you have to start learning how to protect yourself.” Ginny replied.

Harry sighed and gently kissed her lips. “Alright, I’ll show him. Happy now?”

She snuggled back comfortably in his lap. “Yes I am.”

He grinned. “Good.” Then he turned her head so that he could place his lips on hers.

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When Harry apparated to Grimmauld Place with Sirius that Sunday he was dreading his father’s reaction to his hand. Especially when he found out that he had kept it from him the week before. He walked into the kitchen where James and Sirius were seated at the table.

“Hi. Where’s Uncle Remus?”

James smiled at him. “He had something to do for the Order today. How was your week?”

Harry sighed. “Bad. I had detention all week with Umbridge again.”

James sighed. “Why?”

“Because I lost my temper in her class again.” He reached up to scratch his head wondering how he was going to casually mention his hand when James jumped to his feet and grabbed the arm that he had been using to scratch his head with.

*“I must not tell lies – Harry, what the hell is this?”*

Harry gulped. “Um ... remember that rash I had on my hand last week?” When they all nodded he continued. “Well, I sort of didn’t tell you the truth.”



James glared at Harry. "This looks like a Blood Quill."

Harry nodded. "Well, that could be because that's what she's been making me write with."

Sirius jumped to his feet. "Every night for two weeks?"

Harry nodded. "Yes."

James eyes turned smoky. "God damn it! Why the hell didn't you say anything?"

"Because I didn't want you to worry." Harry supplied, hoping that that would ease the anger.

"OH, YOU DIDN'T WANT ME TO WORRY? WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU, HARRY? THIS WOMAN HAS BEEN FORCING YOU TO WRITE LINES IN YOUR OWN BLOOD WHILE CARVING THE WORDS ON THE BACK OF YOUR OWN BLOODY HAND AND YOU DIDN'T TELL ME BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T WANT ME TO WORRY? WELL, TOO BLOODY LATE! I'M GOING DOWN THERE RIGHT NOW AND HAVING A NICE LITTLE CHAT WITH DOLORES UMBRIDGE!!"

Harry stared up at his father in shock. He was silent for a full minute and before he could comment both James and Sirius had stormed out of the kitchen. "Wait! Are you really going there? Now?"

Sirius nodded. "OF COURSE NOW, YOU PRAT! AND I'M GOING THERE TOO, BECAUSE IF I GET A HOLD OF THAT STUPID WOMAN ..."

Harry grabbed a hold of Sirius' arm to side apparate with him back into the tunnel. "What are you going to do?" He asked nervously.

James turned to Harry; his eyes still the colour of smoke and his voice cold. "First, we're going to apparate into Hogsmeade so we can come through the front gates of Hogwarts. Then we're going to have a nice little chat, got it?"

Harry nodded. He watched his father and godfather disappear before he ran through the passageway, making it into the front entrance hall just as James and Sirius walked through the front door. He gulped as he followed them down to Umbridge's office. James banged on the door angrily.

She opened the door, so short that she barely passed James' waist at his height of 6'2. "Hello, can I help you with something?" She asked in her falsely sweet voice.

James nodded. "OH YEAH, YOU CAN BLOODY WELL HELP ME WITH SOMETHING! WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU? FORCING MY SON TO WRITE WITH A BLOOD QUILL DURING DETENTIONS! BLOOD QUILLS HAVE BEEN ILLEGAL IN THE U.K. FOR THIRTY YEARS!! I SHOULD REPORT YOU TO THE MINISTRY! I CAN HAVE YOU THROWN IN JAIL FOR BEING SUCH A STUPID SELFISH SHORT PRAT OF A WOMAN WHO CANNOT EVEN FOLLOW LAWS BUT EXPECTS THE STUDENTS SHE TEACHES TO FOLLOW HER RULES!"

Umbridge stared up at James in shock, her eyes drifting to Harry for a moment and then to Sirius. "Mr. Potter, I presume? Well, your son needed to be punished as he was busy spreading lies around the school as well as disrupting my classes. I could hardly have that and \_"

Sirius glared at her this time. "OH YOU COULD HARDLY HAVE THAT? DISRUPTING CLASS ON A REGULAR BASIS, OKAY GIVE HIM A BLOODY DETENTION BUT DON'T MAKE HIM WRITE WITH A BLOOD QUILL, YOU TOAD WOMAN!"

"How dare you insult me? You're an insufferable and extremely rude man! Who are you anyway?" She demanded.

"I'm Sirius Black, Harry's godfather."

Umbridge paled. "Murderer."

Sirius grinned. "BELIEVE WHATEVER YOU WANT. BUT IF YOU EVER TRY TO FORCE MY GODSON TO DO SOMETHING LIKE

THIS EVER AGAIN I'LL –"

"WE'LL DO MORE THEN COME HERE AND YELL AT YOU!" James interrupted. "LIKE CURSE YOUR OR SOMETHING!"

"ARE YOU THREATENING ME?"

James grinned. "YOU CAN BET YOUR ASS I AM!"

"WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON IN HERE?" Professor O'Bryan demanded from behind Harry. "I was trying to mark some papers in my office and all I can here is screaming!"

"Um Professor, I can explain, you see, my da and my godfather found out about Professor Umbridge making me write with a Blood Quill and they –" He stopped when he heard the curse and turned around.

Professor O'Bryan had just stunned Umbridge.

Harry let out a snort of laughter.

James grinned. "Thank you, Professor, I was thinking about doing that myself. Harry, come in here now, we need to talk." Harry headed further into Umbridge's office with James as Sirius turned to Professor O'Bryan.

"Brilliant! We greatly appreciate your lack of restraint."

She grinned, her green eyes twinkling in laughter. "I couldn't help myself. I'm Alexis O'Bryan, the Ancient Runes professor."

Sirius grinned. "Sirius Black, Harry's godfather. You're the new Order member."

She nodded. "Yes I am." She unstunned Umbridge and then sent ropes at her to tie her to the chair.

Sirius laughed and tugged Alexis towards him, "You are bloody brilliant!" Then in random move of spontaneity he kissed her softly on the lips. But the quick friendly retort died as he tasted her. His only

reaction was: *where the hell had this been his entire life?* His hands moved into her long blonde hair as he deepened the kiss. She tasted like citrus and he loved it. Her lips yielded under his for a moment and then she pushed him away, slapping him across the face.

“YOU INSUFFERABLE PRAT! WHAT RIGHT DO YOU HAVE TO JUST KISS ME LIKE THAT? I SHOULD PRESS CHARGES FOR HARRASSMENT!”

She stormed out of the office, slamming the door behind her and Sirius grinned, licking his lips as he rocked back and forth on his heels. “She loves me.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah right, that’s why she slapped you. What did you kiss her for? You just met her!”

Sirius grinned. “Because Professor Alexis O’Bryan is beautiful and very delicious.” He murmured almost to himself.

James grinned at Harry. “Now we’re in trouble, when Padfoot wants something, he doesn’t stop until he gets it.”

Harry grinned. “And you want Professor O’Bryan?”

Sirius turned to grin at them. “Oh yeah.”

James shook his head at his friend. “Alright, now that we got passed Sirius’ lack of a love life, what the hell are we going to do with her?” He asked as he pointed at Umbridge who was no longer stunned but tied to the chair still and gagged as she glared at them.

Harry grinned wickedly. “Well, we could always leave her like that.”

James laughed. “Good idea. Come on.” They left the office and headed down to McGonagall’s office where James knocked on the door. They heard her call out come in so they went inside. “Hey Minerva.”

McGonagall looked up and gave them a genuine smile. “James, Sirius, this is a surprise.” Her eyes fell to Harry. “Did you get in

trouble with Dolores again?”

Harry grinned sheepishly. “No.”

James nodded. “Were you aware of what Umbitch was making him do during his detentions?”

McGonagall grinned in spite of herself. “I believe that Umbitch, I mean Umbridge, had him writing lines.”

Sirius grabbed Harry’s right arm and held his hand out to McGonagall. “Yeah, with a goddamn Blood Quill!”

McGonagall stared down at Harry’s hand in surprise. “Harry! Why didn’t you say something?”

James rolled his eyes. “Because my son is a prat that’s why! Anyway, we came down here to have little chat with her and it got a bit out of hand. Professor O’Bryan came by and when she found out the problem she stunned Umbitch and we sort of left her tied to a chair and gagged.”

McGonagall smirked. “Why, that’s terrible. I’ll make sure that she’s untied in time for her class tomorrow morning.”

Harry grinned. He had always known there was a reason why he loved McGonagall.

James grinned. “Good.”

Sirius grinned and kissed McGonagall’s cheek making her blush and Harry glance up in surprise. “You rock, McG!”

McGonagall rolled her eyes. “For the millionth time, Sirius, my name is NOT McG.”

Sirius just smirked at her and winked at Harry as James rolled his eyes. “Right, sorry Mum.”

McGonagall glared at him. “Sirius Black, you are insufferable!”

Sirius grinned. "Ah, Minerva, you know you miss me."

James rolled his eyes. "Alright Harry, Sirius and I are out of here. We'll continue with the lesson next Sunday, okay?"

Harry nodded. "Alright. See you later."

He watched them leave before he turned to McGonagall. "Professor, do you have any suggestions about getting the pain out of my hand? Homework has been a killer trying to write with this."

McGonagall nodded. "Go ask Poppy for some Murtlap essence, just soak your hand in it. I'll speak to Dumbledore about Umbitch, I mean, Umbridge! Damn I'm going to kill James Potter!"

Harry laughed. Umbitch – it did have a certain ring to it. He grinned to himself as he headed to the hospital wing; all in all, the day hadn't been too bad.

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## **Chapter 35: Romance and Hogsmeade**

**Author's Notes:** Please review!! by the way -thanks to GinnyMarie for her idea about McGonagall and Umbitch lol.

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## **Chapter XXXV – Romance and Hogsmeade**

The next week went by a lot smoother then the first two. Harry managed to keep his head in Umbridge's class because he just kept replaying the scene in her office over and over again. It made him smile so he managed to ignore her for the most part – after all, having the students read a chapter in class every day wasn't exactly his idea of teaching anyway. Not to mention the fact that he had told Ron, Hermione, Ginny, and Neville the story and that the five of them couldn't stop laughing at Umbitch. But Harry had to admit that the

best day ever was his first day in Transfiguration with McGonagall after the incident with Umbridge.

It had happened at the end of class right before dismissal when McGonagall had raised her voice to get the class' attention.

"Listen up everyone; I've got an important announcement to make. As you all know, Hogwarts now has a High Inquisitor. One of the perks of the job as High Inquisitor is to investigate the teachers, so to speak. Something that our new High Inquisitor plans to start as soon as possible. So as Head of Gryffindor House I am telling you that Professor Umbitch, I mean, Umbridge," her face flushed a bit as she realized what she had done but Harry couldn't help himself he busted out laughing and he could only smirk at her when he heard her mutter, "Damn that James Potter, picking such a true nickname for that foul-mouthed toad! I'm going to kill him!"

The entire class was continuing to look up at McGonagall in shock as if they could not believe their ears but Harry's laughing seemed to have brought them back to life and finally Seamus spoke up.

"Umbitch. I love it! Professor, you rock!"

The class began to cheer slightly as McGonagall grinned. "Enough. No one needs to repeat that. Now, back to what I was saying. Professor Um-BRIDGE will be inspecting classes. Just ignore her and pay attention to your professors. That's all, have a good day."

She dismissed the class who left muttering and laughing about the new name that Umbridge had been given. Harry stayed behind momentarily to grin at McGonagall.

"Professor? Shall I mention to my father that you plan to kill him?"

McGonagall smirked at Harry. "Brat, you're exactly like him! Besides, I can't fault him; the name fits her to a tee. Which is exactly why I'm so angry for letting that slip!"

Harry laughed. "I'll make sure to mention it, Professor."

McGonagall only laughed at him as he left the room.

The investigating for the teachers seemed to start almost right away but the first class that Harry had while Umbridge was there was Divination with Professor Trelawney. Harry never liked Trelawney and he knew that she was an old fraud but he felt kind of bad for her the way that Umbridge was demanding her to see things and asking her questions about her past and everything. He was a little grateful at the same time though because they were interpreting dreams and Harry wasn't sure if he wanted to interpret his as he was still dreaming nightly of the long corridor with a locked door at the end.

McGonagall's class was next to have an inspection and Harry was hardly disappointed. McGonagall walked in and completely ignored her and just began to teach. This highly annoyed Umbridge and she kept making that annoying little cough of 'hem hem' until McGonagall turned around and basically told her that if she wanted an idea on how she taught a class then she should stop interrupting. Harry had to bite his tongue to stop himself from busting out laughing. Umbridge had then begun to scribble on the clip-board that she had brought with her without another word.

Care of Magical Creatures was next and Umbridge had only been asking Grubbly-Plank constant questions about where Hagrid was.

Professor O'Bryan's class was another interesting one. She basically took the same tune as McGonagall. If Umbridge wanted to know about how well she taught the course then she had to stop interrupting. But O'Bryan had taken it one step further and called her a snotty-faced toad. The class had erupted into laughter before they could stop themselves. Umbridge had scribbled quickly in her clip-board once more.

At the end of Ancient Runes, O'Bryan asked Harry to stay back for a moment. Once the class had emptied he made his way over to her desk.

"What can I do for you, Professor?"

She smiled warmly at him. "I was actually hoping that you could do



me a favour.”

Harry glanced at her quizzically. “Um, maybe, what is it?”

She sighed. “Your godfather has sent me a dozen red roses every single day since that incident in Umbitch’s office that I would rather forget. And at night he sends me one single white rose! I thought if maybe I just ignored it that he would go away. But it’s been a week! And he’s obviously not getting the hint. I sent him an owl saying that I’m not interested and that same evening I still got a white rose. Help me.” She replied, almost desperately.

Harry laughed. “No offence, Professor, but I can’t do anything about that. Da says that once Uncle Sirius sets his sights on something he doesn’t give up. I think that you’re on your own for this one.”

O’Bryan sighed. “I don’t have time for a romance of any sort. But he just won’t take no for an answer!”

Harry grinned. “So say yes. Go out with him and if you don’t like him then at least you have an excuse for saying no.”

She nodded. “I do think that that might remain my only option left. Thanks anyway, Harry, you can go.”

He nodded. “Good luck, Professor because when you’re going up against Uncle Sirius, you’re going to need it.”

She smirked at him as he headed towards the door. “Thanks for the vote of confidence.”

Harry left the office and grinned in surprise to find Ginny waiting there for him. He glanced around the empty hallway and yanked her close just as she started to say hello.

“Hel – mmmph.” She moaned as his lips covered hers in a long, soft kiss.

He pulled back and grinned. “Hi.”

She grinned up at him, her cheeks a little flushed. "Great way to say hello."

He dropped his forehead down to hers. "I know. We should do that all the time."

"Good plan."

"So what brings you over here?"

Ginny took his hand in hers as they began to walk together. "Well, I ran into Ron and Hermione when they headed to the Great Hall and they mentioned that you were up here so I thought I'd come see you. You don't mind do you?"

He grinned down at her and kissed her softly again. "Not in the least."

"So what did Professor O'Bryan want?"

Harry grinned. "Do you remember how I told you that in Umbridge's office after O'Bryan had stunned Umbridge, Uncle Sirius kissed her?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah. It was rather impulsive don't you think?"

"Oh I certainly think so, but not to Uncle Sirius. Apparently he's been sending her a dozen red roses every morning since and a single white rose every night before she goes to sleep. She says that she's owled him telling him that she's not interested but he won't give up. She wanted to see if I could do anything to make him stop. I basically told her that it was a hopeless cause." Harry explained.

Ginny grinned. "He's sending roses every day? How romantic! He must really like her!"

Harry shrugged. "I guess so. I don't see how I mean he doesn't even know her."

"He knows his own mind, Harry. Besides I think its sweet, O'Bryan and Sirius – interesting pairing really but then I suppose it's not much different from Lupin and Tonks."

Harry nodded. "I don't actually think Uncle Remus and Tonks are together though. I mean, they're obviously attracted to one another but I don't think that they've done anything about it yet."

"They're slow." Ginny replied as she followed Harry up to his dormitory so that he could toss his bag on his bed. "Speaking of ... how come you've never send me a dozen roses?"

Harry glanced down at her in surprise. "I ... I don't know. Would you like a dozen roses?"

She grinned and stood on her toes to kiss him softly. "I'm just kidding, Harry. Besides, I like yellow roses and yellow daffodils and red lilies and lavender blue dahlias." She kissed him again. "Let's go eat some dinner."

Harry nodded at her as he followed her out of the dorm but his mind was on what she had just said. He hadn't ever given her flowers, not once. They'd been dating now for almost six weeks but he had never even thought to do something sweet like that. And wasn't that the number one thing that the Marauders had told him during his talk – girls like flowers. He sighed, well; he'd just have to make it up to her, that's all.

They took a seat in the Great Hall next to Ron and Hermione, since they had eaten lunch with Colin and Demelza. (They had a system going, share one meal with Ginny's friends and one meal with Harry's friends – well mutual friends really but you get the picture). Hermione leaned over to Harry.

"Harry, Ron and I were talking earlier and we need to talk to you about something."

Harry nodded at her. "Sure, right after dinner, alright?"

She nodded. "Alright."

They ate quickly after that and then the four of them hurried upstairs and into the common room. They found a cozy corner near the fire

where they would have a little bit of privacy. Ginny snuggled herself comfortably on Harry's lap so that he could wrap his arms around her.

"So what's up, guys?"

"Well," Hermione began. "Ron and I had this idea –"

"No, Hermione had this idea and told Ron." Ron insisted.

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Okay fine, I had this idea ... well; Umbridge is the worst Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher that we've ever had. She's not teaching us anything and she expects us to know how to defend ourselves by simply learning the theory of the spell. She's not even teaching just making us read the next chapter of our textbook during every class. It's a waste of both our time and our energy! And it's the last thing we need especially in our O.W.L. year. So I was thinking that maybe we could form our own Defence Against the Dark Arts group to learn new things from a proper teacher."

Harry nodded. "That makes sense. That's actually a pretty good idea too. But who could we possibly get to teach us? I mean, Uncle Sirius, Uncle Remus, and Da or Tonks would probably be the best choice but we could only really get to see them at Hogsmeade weekends. I can get away to see them on Sundays because it's just me, but all of us ... it would never work."

Hermione nodded. "I know and I've thought about that. But you see, I was thinking what if we have a teacher here at school that could help us? Someone who's been through a lot and someone who knows more than most of the students here? Someone who wouldn't look as suspicious as an adult? Someone like you."

Ginny's mouth dropped open. "Hermione, that's brilliant!"

Harry glanced at his friends and girlfriend in surprise. "Me? You want me to teach you Defence Against the Dark Arts? Why? What do I know that everyone else doesn't? You've got better grades than me?"

Hermione shook her head. "No Harry, I actually don't. When it comes to DADA, every year that we've had a proper teacher you've done

much better than me. You've actually had the highest marks in Defence in our year. And you've been through so much, I mean, you've faced You-Know-Who and you've been through that Tri-Wizard Tournament and you've –"

Harry wanted to stand up but with Ginny on his lap he could only glare. "Listen, that was all luck! And it's not my fault that I've done more than anyone else! It's because Voldemort wants to kill me! And now that he's back he's not going to give up until he succeeds! Don't you understand? Do you have any idea what it's like to face him? It's life or death!"

Hermione nodded. "Exactly Harry. We don't know what it's like to face ... to face ... V-V-Voldemort. That's why we want you to teach us."

Harry looked over at his friend in surprise. It was the first time that she had used Voldemort's name. This had an effect on Harry, enough to calm him down and enough for Ron to decide that it was time to speak.

"Just think about it, Harry. Now that You-Know-Who is back we need to learn how to defend ourselves way more than just passing our O.W.L.s and with Umbitch in charge that's never going to happen. We need you."

Harry sighed. "Just the three of you then?"

Hermione bit her lip nervously and cast a sideways glance at Ron. "Well, actually we were kind of thinking it could be for anyone who's interested in learning."

"What do you mean anyone?"

"I mean like students at school. Anyone who is interested in learning real defence we'll meet them in Hogsmeade and discuss a possibility. What do you think?"

Harry sighed. "I don't know. The world thinks I'm a lunatic, remember? No one is going to want to learn anything from me."

Hermione shook her head. "I think that you're wrong. But even so, it wouldn't hurt to extend the invitation out, would it?"

"I guess not."

"So will you do it?" Ron asked.

"I'll think about it. Hogsmeade isn't until Halloween anyway."

Hermione grinned. "Thanks Harry!" She pulled Ron away and they went to go grab some books and things so that Harry could think about it as Harry turned to Ginny.

"What do you think about this?"

Ginny smiled warmly at him and gently ran her fingers through his hair. "I think that it's a brilliant idea! You are the best in DADA and with Umbitch around, no one is learning anything. I think that this is a good opportunity for all of us. We'll have to keep it hidden, of course, which will only add to the adventure. Though I think that you could probably tell the Marauders; they'll probably have some ideas to help you out."

Harry tightened his grip around her waist and leaned in to nuzzle her neck. "I don't know if I could be a teacher."

She grinned. "I think you'd be brilliant! Just think about it, Harry. You don't have to decide anything today."

He nodded. "I know." He was quiet for a few minutes before he spoke up again. "Do you remember when Umbitch first got here and we were talking about how Madam Bones had never really said that she believed us?"

Ginny nodded as Harry lifted his head to look into her eyes. "Yes. What about it?"

"Well, I just remembered a while ago that she did say she believed me. She told Dumbledore to his face that if he believed that I was telling the truth then so did she. So why is Umbitch here? Why is the

Ministry still making me look out to be a lying lunatic?"

Ginny sighed and kissed his cheek. "I think it's because they're afraid to make themselves look wrong. There's a good possibility as well that Madam Bones has been lying. Maybe she really isn't the right minister in charge at the moment."

He nodded. "Yeah I guess." He leaned down to capture her lips with his in a long, soft kiss.

She moaned and began to drag her fingers through his hair. They broke apart when they heard Hermione call their names. She was blushing when they turned to look at her.

"Um, sorry to interrupt, but these owls just came for you, Ginny."

Ginny took the letters from the owls' leg and ripped it open, grinning. "It's from Bill and there's another one from Charlie." She quickly read them over and then handed them to Harry to read. "What do you think?"

He opened the one from Bill first and began to read:

**Dear Firefly,**

**So you've finally landed Harry Potter – congratulations I guess. I personally think that you're much too young to be dating but I know that you had a boyfriend last year, some Corner bloke that the twins mentioned and who I know you told me about a few times. I did enjoy the play by play of how you two ended up together and you most certainly lucked out with Corner falling in love with a girl from France and breaking up with you. Well, I wish you the best of luck with Harry and you can tell him from me that if he hurts you in any way, I don't give a damn if he's practically part of our family – I'll kill him. Clear?**

**Love you tons and I'll write soon when I have more time.**

**Love Always,  
Bill**

Harry closed the letter and opened the one from Charlie next:

**Dear Shortstop,**

**Potter, eh? Interesting choice, but what can I say – he's got good taste! There's no one better than my baby sister. And yes I know you're not a baby but being the youngest that's the way it's going to roll. I hope you two are happy together and you can tell him from me that if he hurts you or makes you cry I'll have to punch him on principle – I'm sure he can understand.**

**I'll hopefully see you at Christmas.**

**Love,  
Charlie**

Harry grinned at Ginny. "Well, I will definitely try my hardest not to hurt you as I'm a dead man."

Ginny laughed. "They wouldn't actually hurt you."

He grinned and leaned down to kiss her softly. "Oh yes, they would. But I must agree with Charlie – I do have excellent taste."

Ginny blushed and chewed her bottom lip as she smiled. "Do you, Mr. Potter?"

He nodded and wondered why watching her chew her lip like that sent shockwaves of lust through his system. "Oh I most certainly do."

He took her bottom lip into his mouth and sucked gently as he nibbled at her mouth. She moaned and kissed him deeply. His hands slid over the tight braid that she had in her hair and he gently began to untie it. After a few minutes of unbraiding the long silk that she called hair, his hands were in it, dragging her closer. He groaned this time as she slid her tongue into his mouth and –

"Bloody hell! Are you two at it again?" Ron demanded as he took a seat across from them.



Harry glared at his friend. "We were."

Ron grinned. "Oops, sorry mate. No, I'm not really sorry as I don't really have any desire to watch you and my sister play tonsil tag!"

"Well, then don't watch."

"Ha, funny. Actually, Hermione and I were wondering if we could maybe work a bit more on our animagus forms."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, that sounds alright. Gin?"

"Okay, but Ron?"

"Yeah?"

Ginny smiled at him sweetly. "If you interrupt us again, I'm going to Bat Bogey you."

Ron paled. "Got it."

Harry grinned, as he tried to hold in his laugh. "Alright, just let me go get the cloak and the map."

\*\*\*\*\*

Classes continued pretty much normally after that. Harry put aside at least one night a week to work on his animagi forms with McGonagall and one night a week to help Ron, Hermione, and Ginny with their forms. They still had not managed to come up with anything yet. But Harry told them that it takes time. Meanwhile, Harry had managed to change his head into that of a wolf by the end of September. He was greatly pleased to know that his transformations were not taking as long as the first one had even if he was still finding it frustrating.

His lessons with James were not as exciting as they had been at the beginning. Now that he had managed to create his elementals he was mostly just practicing calling them forth and asking them to do things. He didn't find it that much fun. But James insisted that once

he had that all down pat they would work on having the elementals there to protect him. Something that James said he had forgotten to do in his fear when Voldemort had arrived at Godric's Hollow. He wanted to make sure that if and when Harry ever faced Voldemort again that he would make sure that he had protected himself with his elementals.

During the second week of October, Hermione cornered Harry again and asked him about teaching Defence. He still wasn't sure what he wanted to do but he agreed to try it when he found himself self-consciously planning lessons and trying to remember spells and charms that he had used in dangerous situations. Hermione explained to him that she would tell people to meet with them at the Hogs Head if they were interested. But Harry told her to use the Three Broomsticks as he remembered Sirius saying something before about a crowded place being the best place to blend into.

Harry also hadn't been able to get the conversation with Ginny out of his head. The one about flowers. He had contacted the local florist shop in Hogsmeade to see what kind of flowers they had and he explained what he was looking for and if they were out of season, he was more than willing to pay the extra cost because on the day of the first Hogsmeade trip, he had little surprise for his girlfriend.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ginny woke up on Halloween morning and stretched lazily in her bed. She heard a light tapping on the bedroom window and she stood up and headed over to pull it open. Her eyes lit up when she realized that there were four owls and Hedwig there. She took the letter from Hedwig and ripped it open as she absently stroked Hedwig's feathers.

**Dear Ginny,**

**I'll meet you in the common room at nine a.m.**

**Love,  
Harry**

**P.S. These are for you. I wish I would have thought to give you**

**them sooner.**

She glanced back up at the owls and then she took the carefully unwrapped the packages from each owl. She opened the paper carefully and gasped. He had sent her flowers. Her four favourite flowers. When she felt tears in the back of her eyes she carefully held them back. It was ridiculous to cry, but he was so sweet. The first owl had delivered her a dozen dahlias in a lavender blue colour; the second owl had brought her a dozen yellow daffodils; the third owl had brought her a dozen red lilies; and the last owl had brought her a dozen yellow roses. She sighed as she inhaled the scent of the flowers. They were beautiful and she had no idea where she was going to put them.

There were four beautiful vases for the flowers as well and she carefully organized them in the vase they came with and placed them on her nightstand. She sighed over them for a few minutes and then she hurried into the bathroom to get ready for the day. She wanted to look amazing for Harry this morning.

She showered and shaved and dried her hair, letting it hang down to her bum in those curly waves of wild fire because she knew that he liked it when she wore it down. She picked out a knee-length white flare skirt and a brown three-quarter sleeve shirt that left her shoulders bare. She slipped into her brown sandals and carefully added just a bit of makeup to her face – enough to give her some colour. She dabbed herself in her scent and was just picking up her purse when her roommates Andrea Donald and Dana Anderson woke up.

“Ginny! Where did all those flowers come from?” Dana asked as she jumped out of bed and hurried over towards them.

Ginny blushed. “Harry sent them for me this morning.”

Dana goggled. “All of them?”

Ginny nodded. “Yes. I mentioned to him weeks ago what my favourite flowers were but I never expected this.”

Dana grinned. "He is so sweet."

Ginny nodded as she found some silver hooped earrings that her dad had bought her for her birthday and slipped them into her ears. "I know. Are you guys coming to the meeting at the Three Broomsticks?"

Andrea nodded. "Oh yeah. We do not want to be taught by Umbitch. We'll see how everything goes. It's at eleven, right?"

"Yes. Alright, well, I've got to go meet Harry. But I'll talk to you guys later. Bye."

She hurried out of her dormitory, her purse on her shoulder and she grinned at Harry when she saw him sitting in his favourite squashy arm chair near the fire. She leaned down and kissed his cheek.

"You're amazing."

He grinned at her and goggled. "You look ... incredible."

Ginny smiled warmly at him. "Thank you and thank you for the flowers. There's so many of them and they're so beautiful."

He grinned and slid a dahlia that he held in his hand behind her right ear before kissing her softly on the lips. "So are you. Are you ready to go down for breakfast?"

She nodded. "Yes. The flowers are wonderful, really Harry. I never expected anything like that."

He grinned. "I know. That's why I waited a while after you mentioned them. Besides," he took her hand in his and kissed it softly making her look up at him in surprise. "This is our first real date and I want it to be perfect."

Ginny's heart just melted. "Me too."

They walked hand in hand down to the Great Hall for breakfast and took a seat at the table. Ginny added honey to her toast before

turning to her boyfriend.

“Are you nervous about the meeting?”

He shrugged. “A little yeah. I don’t think anyone’s going to come.”

“I think that you’re wrong. Lots of people are going to come. I already know of at least five.”

“I’ll just take your word for it. So, we’re going to have one hour to ourselves in Hogsmeade before we’ve got to go to this meeting, any ideas of what you’d like to do?” Harry asked.

Ginny shrugged. “No idea. We’ll find something though.”

He nodded. They finished their breakfast and then went to go stand in line in the entrance hall. Every once in a while, Harry would raise their joined hands and kiss them softly. Ginny just sighed. If he wasn’t careful, she was going to fall in love with him.

They headed into the village, walking hand in hand through the streets. Neither one of them were really talking, they were just enjoying the beautiful day outside as they walked in comfortable silence. She grinned when she saw the sign for Gladrags. Bill and Charlie had given her money for her birthday to buy some clothes for herself and she had yet to buy anything. She wondered if Harry would mind going into the clothing store. She hesitated asking him at first because she remembered that Michael had complained constantly if they were anywhere but the Three Broomsticks or Quality Quidditch Supplies. She shook the thoughts from her head and grinned at Harry.

“Harry, do you mind if I look around for some clothes in Gladrags?”

He shrugged. “No, not at all. Are you looking for something particular?”

Ginny shook her head no as they stepped inside. “No, but Bill and Charlie gave me money for my birthday to buy some clothes and I haven’t spent it yet.”

Harry grinned. "Well, then I guess you better spend it."

Ginny grinned and kissed him softly. "Okay."

Harry watched her as she began to browse through the racks. The one thing about Gladrags was that because most of their business tended to come from Hogwarts students, they carried mostly muggle clothes as that was what the students tended to wear. Wearing wizarding robes on a regular basis was really only something that the older generation did. Even the Marauders dressed casually in jeans most of the time. He watched as she picked out a few pairs of pants and some skirts and a few shirts and blouses and sweaters before heading into the dressing room. He remembered that he had enjoyed watching Hannah try on clothes but he already knew that he was most anxious to see Ginny in the outfits she picked.

Once she had tried everything on, she ended up buying two pairs of blue jeans, a brown pair of dress pants, a black skirt, an emerald green skirt, two white blouses, two sweaters one in blue and one in brown, and two dresses one in black and one in green. When the sales clerk had rung it up she had been short one galleon and had been incredibly embarrassed when Harry had simply handed a galleon over to the clerk. Harry held the bags of stuff in one hand as they walked hand in hand out of the store.

"Thank you for that, Harry." Ginny replied.

Harry leaned down to kiss her softly. "It was only one galleon. I don't mind at all."

Ginny blushed. "But still, you didn't have to do that. Thanks."

He grinned. "Well, now you've got yourself lots of new clothes. Bill and Charlie will be glad to know that you used their money wisely."

Ginny grinned. "I got lucky. I never imagined at Gladrags would have such a fantastic sale. Fifty percent off of everything. Otherwise, I never would have bought so much stuff."

He laughed. "You look amazing and I can't wait to see you wear all of

that new stuff.”

She grinned and kissed him softly. “Wait and see. Are you ready to head to the Three Broomsticks now?”

He sighed. “I guess so. Come on, let’s go.”

Ginny smiled at him. “Harry, everything is going to be just fine.”

He nodded. “If you say so.” He pushed open the door to the pub and headed inside, holding Ginny’s hand tightly in his own and all of her packages in the other. He had no idea what to expect.

Harry and Ginny made their way over to where Ron and Hermione were sitting. They still had ten more minutes until the meeting was supposed to start.

“Hey Harry, Ginny, what’s up?” Ron asked.

Ginny smiled. “We just went shopping. I had birthday money to spend from Bill and Charlie. Have you two been here long?”

Ron shrugged. “About ten minutes. You alright, Harry?”

He shrugged. “I guess so.”

Hermione smiled at him. “Listen Harry; I’m going to start off the meeting, alright, since this was my idea.”

Harry nodded. “Sure, whatever Hermione. Gin, do you want a butterbeer?”

Ginny smiled warmly at him. “Yes please.”

When Harry returned with two butterbeers he turned to his friends. “Listen you guys; I really have no idea what you want me to say or do here.”

Hermione smiled. “Harry, I’ll start everything out, don’t worry.”

Harry was still highly sceptical that anyone would show up but to his surprise, a large group of students made their way over to him, pushing tables together until they were sitting in a large group. By ten after eleven, not only were Ron, Harry, Hermione, and Ginny seated but also Fred, George, Lee Jordan, Angelina Johnson, Alicia Spinnet, Katie Bell, Neville, Dean, Seamus, Lavender, Parvati, Padma, Mandy Brocklehurst, Dana Anderson, Andrea Donald, Ernie Macmillan, Hannah, Wayne Hopkins, Meghan Jones, Justin Finch-Fletchley, Zacharias Smith, Anthony Goldstein, Michael, Terry Boot, Dominique St. Clair, Cho Chang, Marietta Edgecombe, Luna, Colin, Susan Bones, and surprisingly Theodore Nott, the one and only Slytherin.

Hermione smiled at them all. "Hello everyone. I'm Hermione Granger and Harry, Ron and I had this –"

"Hermione!" Harry exclaimed.

Hermione sighed. "Oh alright! I had this idea of forming a secret defence group from Umbridge with Harry as the teacher. I mean, let's face it. She's not teaching us anything! And with O.W.L.s this year for us and with Voldemort back we need to be prepared in defence."

Zacharias Smith spoke up. "You really think that You-Know-Who is back? Why are we supposed to believe that? We've got no proof, only his opinion."

Harry shrugged as he realized suddenly why all of these people were here. They had come to find out what had really happened that night in the grave yard. He glared at Hermione for not thinking of that possibility. "Listen up; I'm not going to tell you guys what happened that night because it was horrible. I've talked about it already to my father, my friends, and Dumbledore and I don't want to go through it again. Dumbledore told you at the end of last year that Voldemort had returned. If you didn't believe him then, then you're not going to believe me now. End of story."

Susan Bones smiled at him. "Harry, did you really do all those great things though?"

"Great things?" Harry asked, not quite sure what she meant by that.



“Yeah?” Dean replied. “Like in your first year you rescued the Philosopher’s Stone.”

Harry blushed. “Well, I – I didn’t do that alone. Ron and Hermione were there to help me and I –”

“And in your second year, didn’t you rescue Ginny Weasley from the Chamber of Secrets?” Nott asked.

Ginny grinned. “He most certainly did. He killed a giant basilisk with a sword for me.”

“And not to mention everything that he had to get through last year in the tournament!” Cho replied.

Harry blushed again. “Well, yeah, but I had help with all that and –”

“Not with that Horntail!” Seamus exclaimed. “That was some pretty wicked flying.”

Harry grinned. “Well, okay, I mean, yeah, some of it I did do alone but I still had help and I –”

“Are you trying to get out of teaching us this cool stuff?” Smith demanded.

Harry shook his head. “No, of course not. I’m just saying that I had a lot of help when I did those things.”

Cho smiled at him. “Not in those tasks you didn’t.”

Harry sighed. “Okay, so I did do a lot by myself, but I still had help in preparing for them.”

“And would you teach us good defence, Harry?” Hannah asked.

Harry smiled at her. “Yes. If you want to learn, then I’ll teach you.”

Hermione pulled out a piece of parchment. “Listen everyone; this

group has to be a complete secret from Umbridge otherwise we'll never get a chance to learn anything. Besides, I heard that the one thing Umbridge is afraid of is that Dumbledore is training a student army to take over the ministry."

"That's ridiculous!" Susan replied.

Luna nodded. "Yeah, I mean we all know that Fudge has trained his own private army of Heliopaths to lead the Magical Law Enforcement Unit."

"Um, okay," Hermione replied. "Well, we'll meet secretly whenever we can during the week and —"

"It can't interrupt our Quidditch schedules though," Angelina replied. "We have three Quidditch teams here as Nott doesn't play on the Slytherin one."

Hermione nodded. "We'll work around them. I think that the more random the meetings the better it will be in the future anyway because she won't know what's happening. I think that everyone who's here should write their names down on this paper so that we know who to contact."

People began to look at each other nervously now. Ernie spoke up. "But what if someone finds the paper?"

Ron rolled his eyes. "Please, do you think that Hermione is going to leave it hanging around for people to see?"

"But we're prefects," Hannah replied.

Hermione nodded. "Yes, Ron and I are too, but we know that we need these lessons if we want to be prepared for Voldemort and for our O.W.L.s. By signing this paper you are also promising to not talk about this to anyone who is not involved in this group or to mention it to anyone outside of this group. Are you guys in or out?"

Ginny took the quill from Hermione and quickly scribbled her name, followed by Ron, Hermione, Neville, Fred and George. This seemed

to get the ball rolling and soon all thirty-three people had signed the list. Hermione folded the parchment up and stuck it in her pocket. Harry and Ginny said goodbye to Ron and Hermione and left the Three Broomsticks hand in hand to walk through the streets of Hogsmeade.

“I never expected that many people to show up,” Harry replied.

Ginny grinned at him. “You can add two more too. Dee wants in but she can’t go to Hogsmeade remember? Dennis does too, Colin’s little brother?”

Harry grinned. “Well, they can go to Hogsmeade next year. So thirty-five people, that’s still a lot.”

Ginny laughed and kissed him softly. “They all want to learn from you, Harry because they understand that you can teach them.”

He nodded. “I suppose.”

“Hey Potter!”

They both turned at the sound and saw Theodore Nott heading their way. Harry still couldn’t believe that he had even attended the meeting or how any of the Slytherins had learned about it; especially when Harry remembered Nott’s father standing in the circle around Voldemort.

“Nott, what can I do for you?”

Nott pulled them over into an alleyway. “I don’t want to be seen with you at the moment, it would cause problems. Listen, I’m sure that you’re wondering about how I found out about this meeting, well, I’m dating Dana Anderson. I know that my father is a Death Eater and I know that you knew that, but I don’t plan to be one. As soon as Voldemort returned, my mother and I left my father as neither one of us wants to be involved with him if he is a Death Eater. I’m on your side and I want to learn how to defend myself – from my father if necessary.”

Harry stared up at Nott in surprise. "You probably understand why I find this hard to believe."

Nott nodded. "Yes I do. But I'm in this thing because I respect you. You've faced more then I could ever imagine and I don't want to be against you or Dumbledore in this war. I want to fight alongside you."

Harry nodded. "Well, we'll see how it goes then, alright Nott?"

Nott nodded. "Alright, and you can call me Ted."

"Okay, Ted, I hope I'm not going to regret this choice."

Ted grinned. "You won't. Now I better go save my girlfriend from Gladrags before she spends all of her money."

Ginny laughed. "Too late, Dana's a shop-a-holic."

Ted grinned. "Trust me, I've noticed. I'll talk to you guys later."

He hurried off in the other direction and Ginny turned to Harry. "Dana has talked about him a lot. She says he's different from other Slytherins and he doesn't have many friends in Slytherin house because he's against his father. I think he'll be good for this group."

Harry nodded. "I hope that you're right."

Ginny smiled and took his hand. "Come on; let's go find somewhere else to go."

He grinned. "Okay, you lead the way."

Ginny grinned. "Gladly."

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## Chapter 36: The DA

**Author's Notes:** Please review! i made the DA a lot bigger bc i felt like it lol

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## **Chapter XXXVI – The DA**

The next morning, Harry was shocked to find a new decree up on the notice board banning all types of student meetings without permission from the High Inquisitor. Harry's first thought was that Nott had squealed but when he had mentioned it to Hermione she had shook her head no. Apparently, she had charmed the parchment that they signed so that whoever squealed would be easily noticeable. Angelina was angry when she saw it because apparently they needed permission to reform the Gryffindor Quidditch team. She made a big deal out of telling Harry to please behave in Umbridge's class so that she didn't have a reason to say no.

Harry found that he had something else to worry about when Hedwig showed up late during his History of Magic class. Her wing was hurt. Harry had immediately brought her to Grubbly-Plank who promised to fix her up right away. McGonagall warned Harry that communication in and out of the castle was being watched. Harry took the letter from Hedwig, glad to see that it was simply the payment for the extra potions ingredients that he had ordered.

He had immediately pulled out his mirror and snuck into a secret corridor that he had remembered from the map. "Da."

James' face appeared in the mirror. "Harry, what's up? Shouldn't you be in class?"

Harry nodded. He quickly explained about the new decree and about Hedwig. "Something huge is going on."

James nodded. "You're right. Don't send letters home anymore and we won't write. We'll talk through the mirror as much as possible. Also, what's this I hear about you forming a secret Defence Against the Dark Arts group?"

Harry looked at his father in surprise. "How did you know?"

“Tonks was in the Three Broomsticks under an invisibility cloak. She’s been keeping an eye on you when you were in village – just in case anything happens you are being watched when you go into Hogsmeade, so don’t complain – but she overheard the meeting. Interesting idea and right under Umbitch’s nose.”

Harry grinned. “It was Hermione’s idea. She thinks that I’ll be a good teacher.”

James nodded. “You will be. I don’t think that you’re going to have a problem with it at all. If you need any help let me, Sirius, or Remus know.”

Harry nodded. “Speaking of Uncle Remus and Tonks – are they together yet?”

James laughed. “Noticed that attraction, did you? No, not yet. From what I’ve gathered from the situation, Moony keeps putting her off. Says that he’s not worth her time because of his furry little problem and because he’s nearly ten years older than her.”

Harry groaned. “Doesn’t he want to be happy?”

James sighed. “He’s stubborn, Harry, and Moony thinks that what he’s doing is for the best. Don’t worry; Tonks is just as stubborn and I think that I’m going to enjoy watching her wear him down.”

Harry nodded. “And Uncle Sirius is still sending O’Brian flowers?”

James nodded. “He’s not going to give up. Besides, I think she’s just being stubborn – she likes him too.”

Harry grinned. “So where’s your girlfriend?”

James snorted. “I have other things to do like worrying about you on a regular basis. Besides, no one has ever managed to catch my eye like Lily. Maybe one day I’ll have what I want, but not now. So how’s your girlfriend?”

Harry grinned. "Ginny's great. We're good together."

James nodded. "You continue to treat her well and you'll always be good together. I'll see you on Sunday. Get back to class."

Harry nodded. "Bye Da."

He shoved the mirror back into his pocket and then headed to the Great Hall for lunch. He told Ron, Hermione, and Ginny about Hedwig and about what McGonagall and his father had said.

They had potions that afternoon and Malfoy was taunting the Gryffindors about Slytherin already having permission for their Quidditch team since Lucius was such an influence in the ministry. He also started making fun of Mr. Weasley and saying that he was such a nutter being obsessed with muggles that it was only a matter of time until he was sent into the special ward at St. Mungo's. Neville had gone berserk at this and dived at Malfoy. Harry and Ron managed to hold him back in time. Harry pulled Neville aside away from the group, ignoring Ron and Hermione's questioning looks.

"Nev, you've got to get a hold of yourself. Malfoy doesn't know about your parents otherwise he would have used that in the past. Okay?"

Neville nodded. "It's not funny though."

Harry nodded. "I know. I've been to see them before too. But you have to ignore him or he'll only make matters worse especially if he ever finds out."

Neville sighed and nodded before he followed Harry into the potions class. Ron and Hermione had asked Harry about Neville but he had shaken his head. That wasn't his secret to tell. Potions class was interesting since Umbridge was asking Snape why he had been turned down as the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher every year that he had applied. Snape had hardly looked thrilled to be answering those questions. Divination was just as bad as Trelawney had received the results of her inspection and she was none too thrilled in what could only be bad results.

That evening in the common room, Fred and George made a show out of showing their new products – Skiving Snackboxes – it was a candy that made you vomit enough to get out of class and then there was another candy that made you back to normal to enjoy in pleasures of your choice. The twins were rolling in the dough on that invention. Hermione was not pleased. But then again, Harry wasn't sure what offended her more – the twins selling the products, or the idea of skipping class.

The Gryffindor Quidditch team finally got permission to start up again and their first practice was in the rain. The weather was terrible and they could barely see anything. Not to mention that Ron hadn't done as well as one would hope. When they finally returned to the locker room, wet and grouchy, Harry's mood hardly improved when he received a sharp searing pain through his forehead. The only thing he knew was that Voldemort was very angry. He wanted something done but it wasn't getting done fast enough. He quickly told Ron what had happened and Ron goggled at him. It was then that Harry realized that he was reading Voldemort's emotions. He immediately found a place to be alone and filled the Marauders in. James promised to talk it over with Dumbledore and get back to him.

Harry was down in the common room later on that evening looking over the Marauder's map. He was trying to find a place big enough for thirty-six people to practice defence secretly but he had yet to find a good place yet. Then he found this area opposite the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy. He wasn't sure what it was, but the room looked pretty big. He pulled the mirror out of his pocket and asked for Sirius.

"Hey Harry," Sirius replied. "It's late, you know?"

Harry grinned. "I know, but I need to ask you something. I'm just looking over the map and across from the tapestry of Barnabas the Barmy there seems to be a large room but it doesn't seem to always be there and I'm confused."

Sirius grinned. "The Room of Requirement. You walk past the room three times thinking hard about what you most require and a door should appear leading to what you need. It would be a perfect room



for a secret defence group.”

Harry grinned. “You read my mind. Thanks Uncle Sirius. Hey, any luck with Professor O’Bryan yet.”

Sirius grinned. “She loves me which is why she can’t resist me. Don’t worry, I’ve got it all figured out.”

Harry laughed. “I’m sure you do. Goodnight.”

“Night.”

Harry slipped the mirror back into his pocket before he headed up to bed. Now he just had to inform everyone of the meeting place for the defence group and when they would meet. He grinned to himself as he closed his eyes. It was all coming together now.

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Harry stepped into the Room of Requirement the next evening and gasped in surprise. The room had expanded itself to be a large room with bookshelves that lined the walls. The books were all about defence: *A Compendium of Common Curses and their Counter-Actions*, *The Dark Arts Outsmarted*, *Self-Defensive Spellwork*, and *Jinxes for the Jinxed* were just a few of the books offered. There were also some foe glasses and Sneakoscopes lying around. Harry only had to wait a few minutes before Ginny came in with Colin, Luna, and Dee.

“Wow, Harry, this place is neat.” Ginny replied as she walked towards him to kiss him softly before taking a seat on one of the pillows that had been provided.

Colin nodded as he sat down next to her. “Yeah, this place is neat.”

Luna only continued to look around almost dreamily with her wand tucked safely behind her ear. “Kind of an odd place.”

Harry grinned. “Well, I guess now we just wait for everyone else.”

Ginny nodded. "A lot more people are coming, then who was just at the meeting, you know."

"What do you mean?"

Ginny shrugged. "Well, since Dee and Dennis want in and they're second years, they have some friends who are interested who have friends that are interested and vice versa. The news has spread so Hermione will have to update the list ASAP."

"How many people do you think will be here?"

Ginny grinned. "A lot. Everyone knows what you're capable of, Harry, and they want to learn from you."

Harry could only nod as he began to pace the room, slightly nervous at the idea of an even larger group of people arriving.

Within ten minutes the room had filled up with everyone. Once everyone was comfortably seated on the pillows, Hermione spoke up.

"Hi everyone, I think that before we officially start this meeting we should choose a leader."

"Harry's the leader," Cho replied, giving Hermione a look that plainly said: 'duh'.

Hermione nodded. "Well yes, but I think that we should make it official. So everyone in favour of Harry being the leader, raise your hand." Everyone raised their hands and Hermione carefully wrote it down. "I also think that we should have a name. Something that we can refer to outside of this room without being suspicious."

"Kind of like a code?" Dennis asked, bouncing in his seat.

Hermione nodded. "Exactly."

"What about Hogwarts Defence Class?" Ernie called out.

"Or the Hogwarts Defence Learning Class?" Wayne suggested.

Hermione shook her head. "Well, something less long."

"The Defence Association," Cho suggested. "We could be the DA for short."

Ginny shook her head. "I like the DA, but instead of Defence Association why not Dumbledore's Army, after all, that's what everyone's afraid of, right?"

Harry grinned. "I like that."

"All in favour?" Hermione called out again and everyone raised their hands.

"Good," Harry replied. "Now that that's been taken care of let's just see who couldn't attend the meeting in Hogsmeade but wants in on the DA. Will you guys please stand up and head over to Hermione to sign your name on the list? Then we will just take attendance from there to make sure that everyone is here."

Once everyone had signed the list, Harry began to call out the names (Hermione had organized it according to house and year). The DA had managed a huge list of people:

### **Dumbledore's Army (DA)**

Led by: *Harry J. Potter*

#### **Gryffindor 2nd Years:**

1. *Demelza Robbins*
2. *Dennis Creevey*
3. *Victoria Frobisher*
4. *Geoffrey Hooper*
5. *Andrew Kirke*
6. *Jack Sloper*

#### **Gryffindor 3rd Years:**

7. *Romilda Vane*

#### **Gryffindor 4th Years:**

8. *Ginny Weasley*
9. *Colin Creevey*
10. *Dana Anderson*
11. *Andrea Donald*

**Gryffindor 5th Years:**

12. *Hermione Granger*
13. *Ron Weasley*
14. *Neville Longbottom*
15. *Lavender Brown*
16. *Dean Thomas*
17. *Seamus Finnigan*
18. *Parvati Patil*

**Gryffindor 6th Years:**

19. *Katie Bell*

**Gryffindor 7th Years:**

20. *Fred Weasley*
21. *George Weasley*
22. *Lee Jordan*
23. *Angelina Johnson*
24. *Alicia Spinnet*

**Ravenclaw 2nd Years:**

25. *Stewart Ackerly*
26. *Orla Quirke*

**Ravenclaw 4th Years:**

27. *Luna Lovegood*

**Ravenclaw 5th Years:**

28. *Anthony Goldstein*
29. *Michael Corner*
30. *Terry Boot*
31. *Dominique St. Clair*
32. *Mandy Brocklehurst*
33. *Morag McDougall*
34. *Padma Patil*
35. *Lisa Turpin*

36. *Su Li*

**Ravenclaw 6th Years:**

37. *Marietta Edgecombe*

38. *Cho Chang*

39. *Eddie Carmichael*

**Hufflepuff 2nd Years:**

40. *Laura Madley*

41. *Eleanor Branstone*

42. *Owen Cauldwell*

43. *Kevin Whitby*

**Hufflepuff 3rd Years:**

44. *Rose Zeller*

**Hufflepuff 4th Years:**

45. *Zacharias Smith*

**Hufflepuff 5th Years:**

46. *Ernie Macmillan*

47. *Hannah Abbott*

48. *Wayne Hopkins*

49. *Meghan Jones*

50. *Justin Finch-Fletchley*

51. *Susan Bones*

**Slytherin 2nd Years:**

52. *Malcolm Baddock*

53. *Graham Pritchard*

**Slytherin 5th Years:**

54. *Theodore Nott*

55. *Blaise Zabini*

56. *Daphne Greengrass*

57. *Tracy Davis*

Everyone was present but Harry was still completely overwhelmed by the huge list of people. Hogwarts barely held five hundred students so with fifty-seven people in the DA, not including himself, Harry was

impressed.

“Okay, first of all, I just want to say thanks to all of the Slytherins who joined this group because it is very rare of them to do anything like that. Okay, now let’s get started. I think that we should start off with Expelliarmus, I know it’s really basic and all that jazz but I think it’s good to use and –”

“A disarming charm?” Zacharias Smith snorted. “Pul-lease! How the hell is that supposed to help us?”

Harry sighed. “That’s up to you. But I used it in June against Voldemort and it saved my life.”

The room had gone dead quiet upon hearing that statement. Nobody had anything else to comment upon hearing so Harry told everyone to break off into partners. He ended up partnered with Neville as he carefully watched everyone around the room. There were a lot of people who couldn’t even perform the disarming charm. He was glad that he decided to start with something so basic. By the end of the first meeting he was pleased with how it had all worked out.

“Great job guys! And is everyone agreed on next Wednesday for a meeting?” Everyone agreed so he grinned. “Alright. Those of you, who have still not mastered the disarming, please practice if you can.”

Everyone left the room except for Ron, Hermione, and Ginny.

“Well, how did it go?”

Ginny laughed and ran into his arms. “Wonderful! You are a natural born teacher.” Then she kissed him softly. “Let’s get rid of those two and find somewhere we can be alone for a bit.”

He grinned. “Sounds like a good plan.” He kissed her again and then they left the room, walking hand in hand, ignoring Ron and Hermione (who were bickering), they headed straight to a deserted corner in the Gryffindor common room.

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By the time that Wednesday came around, Harry was excited to get back with the DA. At the beginning of the meeting, Hermione handed out these galleons for each member. She had placed a Protean Charm on them so that when Harry touched his coin and wrote the date and time on it, everyone else's coin would show that as well. The coin would become hot in their pocket when the time was changed so they would know when the meeting was. That way if the meeting had to be changed at the last minute, everyone wouldn't be running around to try to get a hold of everyone to tell them. Everyone was extremely impressed with her skill. A few people had even asked her why she wasn't in Ravenclaw.

They continued to work on the disarming charm before Harry moved into some more basic hexes and jinxes. He continued to have everyone work in partners and he walked around to correct people if and when they made a mistake.

When he approached Ginny, who was partnered up with Colin, he slipped his arms around her waist and nuzzled her neck. Ginny laughed.

"I am busy trying to hex Colin, Mr. Potter."

Harry grinned and kissed her cheek. "And doing a marvellous job, Miss Weasley, please continue."

Colin laughed. "Don't you have a job to do, Harry?"

Harry grinned. "You need to practice more, Colin, because Ginny has been kicking your ass."

Colin grinned. "Meh – not the first time."

Harry laughed as he headed over to see what everyone else was doing. He did notice something weird going on, however. Every time that Zacharias Smith opened his mouth to disarm his opponent his wand would fly out of his hand. Then Harry noticed Fred and George over in a corner.

“Guys, come on now.”

George grinned. “We couldn’t help ourselves, Harry. He’s a git.”

Harry laughed. “True, he has been bugging the crap out of me. But leave him alone, alright. Besides, you’re supposed to be working on the hexes now not the disarming charm.”

Fred grinned. “You drive a hard bargain, Harry.”

Harry grinned. “All in a day’s work. How’s the inventing going?”

“Great! We can’t thank you enough for the money to start up, Harry! We’ve got so many great ideas and we’re looking for a place to rent.” George replied.

Fred nodded. “Preferably in Diagon Alley or Hogsmeade, but we hope to make a good go out of the joke shop.”

Harry nodded. “You two are already making a fortune so I think you’ll do brilliantly. Let me know if you find anything. Oh, I’m going to need one of every invention you’ve got by Christmas – Da and Uncle Sirius love them.”

Fred laughed. “We’ll give you them for free no buts! We bow to the original Marauders themselves.”

George nodded. “Yeah, no cost.”

“Besides, you gave us the money to start up so everything you want is free.”

Harry sighed. “You two drive a hard bargain.”

Fred grinned. “Why thank you!”

Harry smirked. “Now get back to work and leave Smith alone!”

George grinned. “We’ll try.”



Harry laughed, but he knew that he would be keeping a closer eye on the two of them for the rest of the meeting.

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## **Chapter 37: Quidditch Disaster**

**Author's Notes:** Please review!!

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### **Chapter XXXVII – Quidditch Disaster**

The DA continued to meet weekly whenever they could, but the meetings were moved around a lot due to Quidditch practices and other meetings or study groups. Harry figured that the more random the meetings the better it was anyway because Umbridge would have a less chance of suspecting them.

In the way of Umbridge, she continued to make things horrible for Harry but he managed to control his temper by thinking of Ginny. Thoughts of her beautiful red hair and her big brown eyes and her milkmaid skin, or that soft sprinkle of freckles over her nose that he loved, and the way that she smelt like spring and strawberries – those thoughts kept him sane as well as happy. Not to mention how happy he was when he was thinking about the DA and how they were breaking Umbridge's dumb rules from right under her nose.

Harry couldn't believe how well everyone was learning as well. They really listened to what he had to say and they really cared about learning how to do things right. Even the Slytherins wanted to learn which surprised him to no end. He couldn't believe that they were actually there and he hated himself for being suspicious of them just because of the house that they belonged to, not that he didn't have a reason, but that was beside the point.

Ted Nott had actually turned out to be a pretty great guy. He was smart and friendly and he was nothing like Malfoy. First of all, Ted hated Voldemort and he hated his father for becoming a Death Eater

and following Voldemort. But most of all, he hated Voldemort for taking his father away from him.

Blaise Zabini was another huge surprise. He was madly in love with Daphne Greengrass who thought that Blaise was an arrogant self-centered prat (the entire scenario between the two of them reminded Harry strongly of the stories that he had heard of how his parents had gotten along at Hogwarts before they ended up together). Blaise would do anything for Daphne, he didn't care what it was – he was hopelessly in love with her. But the main thing about Blaise and Daphne was that they both couldn't stand Malfoy. Blaise had actually stated that Malfoy was a huge prat who was making all of Slytherin House look bad.

Tracy Davis was the most surprising Slytherin. Harry didn't know her too well as she tended to be very quiet and kept to herself a lot – other than when she was around Daphne who was her best friend. It turned out that Tracy's father was a muggle and her mother had been a Death Eater in Voldemort's early years. However, Mrs. Davis had realized that being a Death Eater was not something that she wanted and when she tried to get out of her situation she had been murdered by her own cousin, Bellatrix Lestrange. Tracy had grown up with her muggle father hating Voldemort, Death Eaters, and anything else it stood for. And the weirdest part of the entire scenario, at least in Harry's opinion, was that Tracy seemed to have a massive crush on Anthony Goldstein. If Harry had been shocked to see Ted dating a Gryffindor, the idea of another Slytherin falling for a Ravenclaw seemed crazy. Slytherins always stuck with each other.

As for the two second years that had come to the DA on Ted's urging, they were anxious to learn defence. Apparently, Malfoy, Crabbe, and Goyle were only three of the many older students who picked on the younger ones using words, curses, or hexes. It really was a basic case of initiation. They looked up to Ted and Blaise and they were just as much in awe of Harry. Malcolm and Graham, as well as most of the other second years that didn't know Harry very well, were still young enough to look up at Harry and see a hero. This embarrassed Harry to no end as he still never saw himself as a hero.

Ginny only teased him about his embarrassment. She told him that

she thought that it was cute the way that he was embarrassed to be a hero. She also made a point of telling him that he would have to get used to being a hero because he had already accomplished so many great things that it would only be a matter of time before he did more. When Harry had made a point of protesting this, Ginny had quickly and effectively climbed into his lap and silenced him with a kiss. All of his thoughts had then evaporated when he happily lost himself in Ginny.

Harry was also extremely busy every Sunday afternoon working at Grimmauld Place with James. His elemental powers had increased drastically and he now had a much larger scope of control on them. James had had him expand past the stage of simply getting them to fetch things for him and had then suggested having his elementals do his homework.

Harry had been thoroughly shocked at this. "I can make my elementals do my homework? How? Why? Isn't that cheating? How can they do it if they are just animals?"

James had only grinned at him. "Elementals can do anything and everything that you yourself can do. And no it's not cheating to get them to do your homework because for them to do so they are obtaining the knowledge from you. You just have to make sure that you instruct them to do it in your own writing. They will do it and they will do it with every ounce of knowledge that you possess on the subject."

"Wow! I'm going to try that right away!"

James laughed. "I figured you would."

Harry had tried it and it had indeed worked. He had read over all of the papers once they were finished and he was thoroughly surprised that the elementals had written them out, completely taken aback by the idea that all of that knowledge had been inside his own brain. He did still have to do some things by himself however, like reading the text book so that he could obtain the knowledge in his mind. But since he only had to read the books and then instruct his elementals to write the papers, he still saved a lot of time.

James had then proceeded to teach him how to obtain knowledge from his mind in the case of tests or for any other reason using his elementals. By calling forth the elementals wordlessly they would still come but now James wanted him to learn how to call them forth in his mind. By this he meant that instead of the elementals appearing beside him they would instead appear in his mind and they would somehow be able to gather the information that he was looking for and bring it to the front of his brain where his thoughts dribbled down to. He could then use this knowledge as he wished.

It was hard work to only use his mind this way and James wasn't sure how well it would work what with his weird Voldemort vibes going on ('weird Voldemort vibes' was the name that the Marauders had given to Harry's scar problem – it never failed to make him laugh). Harry did have trouble controlling it at first but after a few attempts he quickly managed to obtain the information while still keeping a tight control on his elementals. He also had to remember to dismiss them from his mind when he was finished because the ancient magic was very powerful and the last thing that he needed was for his elementals to have a free reign in his mind – not that they would do anything but it was better safe than sorry.

His animagus lessons with McGonagall were mostly for precaution now. He just had to make sure that if something went wrong he had someone nearby to help him change back. His wolf form was finally beginning to take form. The only thing that he had left to work on was the full transformation. McGonagall was extremely impressed. As to the animagus lessons with Ron, Hermione, and Ginny, only Ginny had managed to do anything. During their last lesson she had successfully managed to change her left hand into a white fox paw with reddish fur along the cuff of her wrist. She had been jumping with excitement. Harry had been impressed as she had only taken four months to obtain it. He told Ron and Hermione not to give up.

As the end of November kicked in, Gryffindor was ready to play in their first match of the season which luckily enough was against Slytherin. Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff had already played, Ravenclaw winning, 180 to 30. Harry had his Quidditch bag slung over one shoulder and his Firebolt over the other as he headed through the

halls towards the Quidditch pitch. He was a little nervous about the first game of the season and he was anxious to play again. He had really missed Quidditch the year before when it had been cancelled due to the Tri-Wizard Tournament.

He grinned when he felt a small hand slip into his and he turned to smile at Ginny. "And what are you doing down here this early?"

Ginny grinned up at him. "I came by to give my boyfriend a kiss before the game.

Harry smirked. "Well, I hope it's for luck."

Ginny shook her head no as she stopped him in the hall. "Oh no. It's purely for my own selfish pleasure." She replied as she slipped her arms around his neck.

Harry grinned as he put his bag and broom down so that his arms could encircle her waist. "Well, if you must, you must."

She grinned and brought her lips softly to his. "Oh, I must." She nibbled lightly on his bottom lip and he grinned, waiting for her to take what she had dubbed her selfish pleasure. She continued to nibble lightly, her fingertips gliding over the back of his neck and sending a tingling sensation down his spine. She gently grazed his jaw line and then slid her tongue over his bottom lip and he trembled.

Ginny smiled smugly. "Oh, to make my man want me."

Harry laughed and pulled her closer. "I want you." He tried to kiss her but she slid away from him, instead pressing her lips to his throat. Harry groaned as her tongue slid over his Adam's apple, sucking gently and causing his pulse to speed up. Her hands slid up his jumper, running softly over the smooth skin of his back and he moaned. His hand moved up to her chin, tilting her head up so that he could look into her eyes and then he crushed his mouth to hers.

Ginny moaned this time when she felt him press her back up against the cold stone wall of the castle. His hand glided up her jumper, his fingers dancing along her rib cage and making the knots in her

stomach jump and tremble with excitement. Her hands fisted in that thick mess of black hair to pull him closer and Harry's hands began to glide down the thick braid that held her hair in.

He deepened the kiss, thrusting his tongue in her mouth, desperate for her taste. "Ginny," he moaned as he continued to nibble at her lips.

"Mmm," she moaned back as she slid her mouth over to his ear.

"Mr. Potter, Miss Weasley, don't you two have other places to be at the moment?" Professor O'Bryan asked from behind them.

They jumped apart and turned around to look at her. She was wearing a Gryffindor scarf and had a slightly amused smirk on her face.

"Sorry, Professor."

O'Bryan grinned. "Hmm, yeah you look real sorry, Mr. Potter, and you both look pretty damn pleased with yourselves at the moment. Try to control your urges a little better. Oh, and Harry?"

"Yeah?"

"Tell your godfather that when flowers aren't wearing a woman down, you don't send her a puppy."

Harry grinned. "Uncle Sirius sent you a puppy?"

O'Bryan blushed. "Yes well ... it was hardly appropriate. He's adorable of course and I couldn't give him away. He's a little black ball of fur, a lab actually." She sighed. "Apparently his name is Padfoot."

Harry grinned. "Padfoot?"

O'Bryan nodded. "Well, I didn't name him. Besides it's a silly name anyway. And he is not going to wear me down by sending me a puppy! That's ridiculous by the way, sending me a puppy! So just ... just tell him to stop or give up or something."

Harry continued to grin at her. "He won't listen, but I'll tell him. Oh, and Professor?"

"Yes?"

"I think that he's wearing you down."

O'Bryan sighed. "I won't let him wear me down. Now you better head down to the Quidditch pitch before Miss Johnson calls out a man hunt. And next time that the two of you are interested in such an intense snog session I suggest that you find a more private place. Good luck in the game."

She hurried away and Ginny turned to Harry with a sappy grin on her face. "He bought her a puppy?"

Harry grinned. "And named him Padfoot. She's wearing down, slowly."

Ginny laughed. "I never knew that Sirius Black could be so sweet."

Harry grinned. "Hey, I can be sweet too!"

Ginny smiled and kissed him softly. "The sweetest. Now hurry up and get down to the Quidditch locker rooms. I bet Ron is still super nervous. You probably need to give him a pep talk."

Harry sighed. "I'm no good at pep talks."

"Go!" Ginny replied.

Harry grinned as he picked up his broom and Quidditch bag. "Hey Gin?"

"Yeah?"

"Remember how you said that you were going to kiss me purely for your own selfish pleasure?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah?"

He grinned. "You lied. I enjoyed it too."

Ginny laughed and slapped him playfully on the arm. "Prat! Now go play Quidditch and win that first match for Gryffindor."

"Aye, aye Captain!"

He could hear Ginny laughing as he headed down to the Quidditch pitch. When he walked into the locker room and headed over to his spot to change, he noticed Ron sitting in his Quidditch robes and staring into space. Harry quickly changed into his robes and then took a seat next to his best friend.

"Hey mate, how are you holding up?"

Ron blinked and slowly turned to look at Harry. "What am I doing here? I can't play Quidditch! I'm rubbish!"

Harry sighed. "Ron, you're a great Quidditch player when you put your mind to it! You just have to concentrate on the game and ignore the taunts from the Slytherins. I know that you can do it!"

Ron nodded; a small glint of confidence coming into his voice. "I can do it!"

Harry smiled. "Yes you can! Now just keep that confidence. Let's go out there and kick Slytherin's arse!"

Ron nodded. "Okay."

Harry went over to grab his broom and Alicia placed a hand on his arm. "Harry, we need Ron confident for the game today; so whatever you do, don't let him see the badges that the Slytherins are wearing."

"What are they?"

Alicia shook her head. "Just don't let him see them."



They headed out onto the pitch and Angelina and Warrington shook hands. That was when Harry noticed the badge that Malfoy was wearing on his robes. It said: *Weasley is Our King*. The game began and Harry could only groan when Ron let in the first quaffle and the Slytherins began to sing:

*Weasley cannot save a thing,  
He cannot block a single ring,  
That's why Slytherins all sing,  
Weasley is our King.*

*Weasley was born in a bin,  
He always lets the quaffle in,  
Weasley will make sure we win,  
Weasley is our King.*

*Weasley is our King,  
Weasley is our King,  
He always lets the quaffle in,  
Weasley is our King.*

"Like the lyrics, Potter?" Malfoy drawled. "I wrote them myself."

"Yeah, real witty, Malfoy." Harry replied, making sure that he had made a point of rolling his eyes.

The game only got worse as it wore on. Ron had lost all of his confidence by now and was letting in goal after goal. Harry finally managed to snag the snitch from right under Malfoy's nose and won the match for Gryffindor.

But that was when the trouble had started.

Malfoy had begun to taunt Harry about his mother and then he had proceeded to insult Mrs. Weasley. He was saying something along the lines that Harry enjoyed his time at the Burrow with the Weasleys because the stink reminded him of his dead muggleborn mother. He had tried to ignore it, he really had, but when Malfoy had started going on about Mrs. Weasley being plump he had simply lost his

temper and punched Malfoy in the nose. He was extremely satisfied to see the blood spurting from his nose when Alicia had grabbed him and pulled him back.

By this time, Fred and George had realized what Malfoy was saying and had dived in his direction. Angelina grabbed Fred and Katie had grabbed George, doing their best to hold them back. But George and Harry managed to break away again almost at the same time and they both punched Malfoy again.

They expected the lecture from McGonagall and they expected the loss of points with a promise of detention but what they hadn't expected was Umbridge.

She had told them that it had been a disgusting show of poor sportsmanship and that as a punishment, since she was High Inquisitor and she had the powers to do so, she was giving all three of them a life long ban on Quidditch. Fred was involved in the ban because even though he hadn't actually done anything, he would have if Angelina and Katie hadn't held him back once George and Harry had escaped. She had then taken away their brooms and chained them in her office.

When the three of them had returned to the Gryffindor common room where people were celebrating the victory they did not feel like they had won the match. Harry sat down in his favourite armchair and when Ginny slid into his lap, two butterbeers in her hands, he could only sigh.

"What happened?" She asked. "You and the twins look like someone died."

Harry gulped. "Umbridge."

Ginny sat the butterbeers on the end table next to the chair. "What did Umbitch do now?"

"She gave Fred, George, and I a life long ban on Quidditch and locked up our brooms."

Ginny stared at Harry in shock for a full minute. "She can't!"

Harry nodded solemnly. "She can and she did." He looked up at Angelina when she appeared next to them. "Sorry, Angie."

"What the hell am I going to do with a Quidditch team that has no beaters and no seeker?"

Harry sighed. "No clue. Find replacements I guess."

Angelina sighed. "This bites! Notice how Malfoy started the entire thing and he didn't even lose house points!"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I noticed."

Ginny snuggled closer to Harry as Angelina headed over to Fred and George. "I'm sorry, baby; I know how much you love Quidditch! No one in Gryffindor even compares to you in seeking skills. What is the team going to do?"

Harry shrugged. "I have no idea maybe they can ... Ginny."

"Huh?"

"You can be seeker! You're really good."

Ginny blushed. "Thanks Harry, but I'm more of a chaser girl myself."

Harry shrugged. "That doesn't mean anything. You're a good seeker; I think that you should try out for the team." When she looked a little hesitant he pouted, "Please, for me?"

Ginny smiled and kissed his cheek. "Of course. Where's Ron anyway?"

"I think that he's trying to drown himself in the showers. He was a disaster."

Ginny nodded. "He lost his confidence is all. As soon as that first goal went in he was screwed."

"I know." He laid his head closer to hers and kissed her softly. "I'm so pissed at Umbridge."

"So am I! She's a stupid cow! It's not like you beat Malfoy over the head with broomsticks so why the hell do you have a life long ban on Quidditch?"

Harry grinned. "You know McGonagall said something very close to that. I think she's doing it because she knows it would make me unhappy. She hates me."

Ginny sighed and kissed him. "But I like you."

He laughed. "Good. I like you too."

Ginny grinned and was just about to kiss him again when they saw Ron come into the portrait hole. "He looks miserable."

Harry nodded. "Yeah he does. Hey mate, come here!" Harry called out.

Ron headed over in their direction, nodding at Hermione when she fell in step beside him. He fell into the nearby chair, his ears burning red. "I told you that I was rubbish!"

"Ron, for the last time you're a good Quidditch player when you put your mind to it! You just have to concentrate more on what you're doing and try not to lose confidence when you fail to catch a quaffle!" Harry exclaimed. He was frustrated with Ron and he was frustrated that he could no longer play Quidditch.

Ron sighed. "But that's the problem, Harry! I can't keep my confidence up! It would be better for everyone if I just resigned!"

Harry shook his head. "You can't resign! Besides then Gryffindor would only have three chasers for a Quidditch team!"

"What do you mean?" Ron asked quizzically.

Ginny sighed as she grabbed Harry's arms and carefully wrapped them around her waist. "At the end of the game, Malfoy was taunting Harry, Fred, and George and they punched him. Then Umbitch gave Harry, Fred, and George a life long ban on Quidditch and locked up their brooms! They've been kicked off the team."

Ron goggled at them. "No way! She can't do that, right?"

Harry nodded. "She can and she did. Which is why you can't resign, it's bad enough that our team is minus a seeker and two beaters. I told Gin to try out for the seeker though; I think that she would be brilliant."

Ron nodded. "She would be brilliant, do it, Gin."

Ginny grinned. "I will." She reached up to kiss Harry softly.

"Oy! Come on now, I don't need to see that!" Ron protested.

Ginny shrugged. "Too bad. Harry had a bad day and I think snogging him senseless would improve it wonderfully."

Harry grinned. "It most certainly would." He unbraided her hair and let his fingers slide through it before he brought his lips to hers.

Ron rolled his eyes – *hey, whatever worked, right?* But he needed someone to help him get over his bad day. His eyes drifted towards Hermione and then he promptly shut off his mind from that direction. It would never happen. And that was the end of that.

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## Chapter 38: Hagrid and the Dream

**Author's Notes:** please review!!

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## **Chapter XXXVIII – Hagrid and the Dream**

Later on that evening, Harry and Ginny's snogging session was interrupted by Hermione informing them that Hagrid had returned. The four of them had quickly snuck under the invisibility cloak and moved down to Hagrid's cabin. The story that he had for them was incredible, even if he was avoiding the reason for him being so badly injured. Hagrid had definitely been on Order business.

At the end of last year he had left with Madame Maxime and they headed to the mountains in France to try to befriend the giants. They went to the Gurg of the giants, who was the leader, bringing him a gift in the name of Albus Dumbledore and then promising to bring something back the next day. The second day the Gurg sounded pretty interested in learning what Dumbledore had to say. But on the third day, they were in trouble because another giant had killed the Gurg and taken over the position which meant that they had to start from scratch all over again. The problem was that this new Gurg was not interested in Dumbledore.

They had hid that evening in the caves and that was when they had seen the Death Eaters speaking to the Gurg, only this time, the Gurg seemed interested in what they had to say. They then decided to look for a few other giants who might still be interested. They found a few in a cave but the next day, the Gurg had raided them out and no one was interested anymore. This was everyone's worse fear as it only proved what they had been dreading; Voldemort was gaining more power.

They were interrupted by a sudden appearance of Umbridge who almost seemed to be scoping out the cabin looking for Harry as if she knew that he was there. The way that she was questioning Hagrid as well about where he had been and what he had been doing, Harry got an uneasy feeling in the pit of his stomach telling him that Umbridge knew exactly what he had been doing and what he had been up to. When she finally left, they snuck back up to the castle after warning Hagrid to stick as close to the curriculum as possible so that Umbridge didn't have an excuse to sack him. But their warnings fell upon deaf ears.

The first Care of Magical Creatures class with Hagrid was dreaded, especially when they headed into the Forbidden Forest. Harry could only roll his eyes at Hermione as she continued to try to ask Hagrid if these creatures were safe. But then all thoughts of that vanished from his mind when he saw those horse-like creatures that he had seen pulling the school carriages.

"These are Thestrals," Hagrid replied with a smile. "Now how many of you can see them?"

Harry was glad that he would finally be learning the secret to these creatures. He raised his hand along with Zabini and Neville.

"Now why can you three see them? Does anyone know?"

Hermione raised her hand attentively. "Only people who have seen death can see a Thestral."

"Correct. Ten points to Gryffindor."

Hagrid went on to explain that Thestrals were thought to be unlucky because of the whole death thing but that it wasn't true. They had a great sense of direction and could find anywhere you asked them too. Hogwarts apparently had one of the only domestic herds left.

Umbridge showed up for her inspection and she was incredibly harsh. She made Hagrid out to be an idiot and Harry could only groan at what he knew was going to be a terrible review.

The weeks passed by quickly and Harry found himself counting down the days until he could go home to the manor for Christmas. All of the Weasleys were going to be staying at the manor with them as well. He had never wanted to go home so badly.

It was the final DA meeting until after Christmas and Harry stood calmly in the corner as he waited for everyone to come in. Ginny rushed inside with a huge grin on her face.

"Harry, I did it! I made seeker!"

Harry grinned and kissed her softly. "I knew that you could do it. Good job."

She smiled. "I know that you would much rather play."

"Hey, it's not your fault. Besides, you're a great seeker and I expect you to help Gryffindor win, okay?"

She nodded. "Okay. Harry after the meeting I promised Colin that I would help him out with his present to his parents so I can't wait for you tonight. Is that alright?"

He nodded. "That's fine. I'll see you later in the common room anyway. So who are the new beaters?"

"Andrew Kirke and Jack Sloper. They're second years and not nearly as good as Fred and George but they'll have to do." Ginny explained.

Harry nodded as the room began to fill up with people. Once everyone had arrived, he explained that since it was the last day before the holidays they were just going to review everything that they had already learned. He split them up into groups and watched as everyone began to perform all of the spells, charms, curses, and jinxes that he had taught them. He felt pride rip through him as he watched. When the meeting was over he wished everyone a Happy Christmas and then worked on setting the room back in order like he usually did. A few people had hung around to talk to him as well. Zabini was the last person to leave but then he noticed Cho standing in the corner.

"Hi," he replied.

She smiled at him. "Hi. You're doing a really great job with this club."

He grinned. "Thanks. I'm glad that everyone is learning so well. I hope to start on patronuses after the Christmas break. Are you going home for Christmas?"

She nodded, tears welling up in her eyes. "Yes. I miss my parents. But I can't help but wonder if Cedric and I would still be together if he



was alive. It would have been a year on Christmas Eve that we'd been dating."

Harry nodded. "I'm sure that you would be. He loved you a lot."

She stepped closer to him. "I – I've been meaning to ask you. Did – did he mention me at all before he died?"

Harry shook his head no. This was the last thing that he wanted to talk about. But she looked so pitiful with tears running down her cheeks so he tried to contain the anger he felt at being asked to remember that night. "I – he didn't really have much of a chance to say anything at all."

"Oh," Cho replied.

"Yeah, listen Cho I need to head back now so unless there's anything else that I can do for you at the moment I –"

"There is one more thing," Cho replied softly.

Harry nodded. "What's that?"

She took another step closer to him and planted her lips on his. He didn't shove her away because he was shocked. He stood there, stiller than a statue as he looked at her in utter shock. He felt nothing in the kiss. It wasn't like before when he had felt lust for her on sight. Now he felt nothing but sympathy and disgust. He pushed her away.

"What the hell are you doing?" He demanded.

Cho sighed. "I like you, Harry, and I know that you like me. I was thinking, well, the first time we never really got off on the right foot. So I was thinking we could try again and see how it turns out."

Harry shook his head. "Cho, I have a girlfriend."

Cho shrugged as she danced her finger down his chest and lower until she tapped the snap on his jeans with her finger. Harry grabbed her hand and pulled it away from him. "So? She can't give you what I

can. She's a girl and I'm a woman."

"Well, I don't want you. I want Ginny."

"You want that ugly little red head? Why? What does she have that I don't?"

"Class."

Her hand moved so fast that Harry didn't even feel the slap across his face until the sting came afterwards. "How dare you? I have class! I'm ten times more beautiful than she'll ever be! She has those stupid blemishes across her nose and not to mention the fact that she's ... she's ... she's a scarlet woman!"

He shrugged. "Don't talk about her like that! You don't even know her! I do and it's Ginny I want, not you. So get over it!"

Cho glared at him and then she turned on her heel and hurried over to the door. She yanked it open and then turned to look at him. "You'll never have it as good as you would have with me." Then she stormed out of the room.

Harry ran his hand over his chin and sighed. He had never expected that. He knew that she had been overly nice to him most of the year but ... he didn't know what he had been expecting but not that. He shoved his wand in his pocket and then he left the room, heading back to the Gryffindor common room lost in thought. He ended up not going straight back to the common room, but wandering the halls for over an hour wondering what he had ever really seen in Cho Chang in the first place. Finally after wandering around for almost two hours he headed back to the common room. He took a seat in his favourite armchair and occupied his time by watching Ginny argue with Colin over something at the other end of the room. It was late and most people were already heading up to bed. He looked up when Hermione sat down across from him.

"You don't look so well."

He sighed. "I had a bit of an incident."

"And you're left cheek is a little red. What happened?"

"It's still red? Blimey she hit me hard. I got slapped by Cho."

Hermione glanced up at him in surprise. "What?"

He nodded. "Long story but basically she wants me back and I told her that I wasn't interested and that I have Ginny. She wasn't too pleased with me."

Hermione nodded. "She's been crying all over the school about Cedric yet she wants another boyfriend. Where's her logic?"

Harry shrugged. "Beats me." He grinned when he saw Ginny approach him and slide comfortably into his lap.

"Well, I'm heading up to bed. It's late. I'll talk to you guys tomorrow. Bye." Hermione replied as she headed up the stairs to the girls dormitories.

Harry glanced at his watch and realized that it was almost twelve thirty and that the common room had emptied pretty quickly. He turned to smile at Ginny. "I thought that you were helping Colin."

"I give up on him. He wanted me to help him organize this photo album thing that he constructed for his parents but he's too crazy and critical so I told him to do it himself." Ginny explained. "What happened to you? Your cheek is all red."

Harry sighed. "Cho slapped me."

"Why?"

"Because she kissed me and I told her that I wasn't interested and that I had a girlfriend. So she asked me what you had that she didn't and I said class. She slapped me right across the face."

"Oh, you poor baby," Ginny murmured before kissing him softly. "Do you really think that I have class?"

Harry nodded. "Definitely."

"So what do I have that Cho doesn't have?" Ginny asked, a small mischievous smile on her face.

Harry grinned. "Let's see; you're beautiful. You've got this gorgeous red hair that I always think looks like it's the colour of wild fire. It feels like silk and smells like strawberries and I love to have it in my hands. Then there's these big chocolate brown eyes that can make me do anything you want because I've a weakness of them. And this soft sprinkle of freckles across your tiny nose that you always try to hide with makeup and this cute little bottom lip which you chew a lot and it drives me insane. Not to mention this soft milkmaid white skin that feels like satin and I love to feel the touch of your skin on my own when we kiss. And I can't forget this gorgeous body. You're so beautiful."

Ginny blushed. "So, it's purely physical then?"

Harry shook his head. "No. And I love that blush that creeps into your cheeks as well and I just die of curiosity wondering if that blush stays in your cheeks or if it runs down your entire body." She blushed deeper. "But there's also that mouth of yours and the way that you can bully me into doing anything – like telling my father about the Blood Quill. Or the way that you can make me laugh or snog me senseless. Or the way that I know that no matter what I tell you, you won't tell anyone else and that you won't judge me, you just accept me, flaws and all, even if you might try to change a few of those flaws." Ginny laughed then, tears twinkling in the back of her eyes. "And not to mention how smart you are. You've got incredible grades and you're a powerful witch, one that I know will do something great one day. And there's the fact that we share one common factor that no one else can say – we both survived Voldemort. Those are the main characteristics that you have and Cho doesn't."

Ginny nodded. "Harry ... that's, that's the sweetest thing ever. You make me feel so beautiful."

He leaned down to capture her lips in his for a soft kiss. "You are

beautiful. Ginny ... I think I'm in love with you."

Ginny's eyes widened and she slipped her arms around his neck, running her fingers softly through his hair. "Why do you think?"

He shrugged. "Because you make me feel things that no one else ever has before. I feel ... complete with you. Because thinking of you keeps me sane and keeps me happy. I dream about you. And I can see a future with you but I can't see my future without you."

Ginny smiled mischievously. "I think that's a lot more than thinking you're in love with me."

He grinned when she placed her hand over his heart to feel it pounding there. "You're right. I don't think, I know. I'm in love with you, Ginny Weasley."

She smiled and kissed him softly. "I'm in love with you too."

Harry glanced up at her in surprise. "You are?"

She nodded. "I didn't want to be. I don't even know when I started falling. But that day in the garden when you kissed me, I felt like my entire world had just stopped and opened a new beginning for me, a new path to follow. But I couldn't help but wonder if you thought that I was only dating you because of that stupid girlish crush I had on you when I was eleven years old. Then the feelings I was getting ... I didn't know if they were real or if they were just wishful memories of what I had felt when I fancied you." She sighed happily. "But then you sent me all those flowers and I was a goner. My first thought was that you better watch yourself before I go and fall in love with you. Then after that day in Hogsmeade, as I lied in bed surrounded by all of my favourite flowers it hit me ... I was already crazy in love with you. Because you have everything that I want."

He grinned. "Oh yeah? What do I have that no one else has?"

Ginny laughed. "You're powerful. And you're smart and not to mention so handsome. I love this rat's nest that you call hair that just sort of springs up everywhere all of the time and I love to drag my

fingers through it. You're hair is so soft and I love it. But it's you're eyes that I fell in love with. These beautiful emerald green eyes, almond shaped and spectacular. Or maybe it was this sexy little cleft in your chin or this sexy long lean body from Quidditch training. Or maybe it's your hands. Big, wide palmed, long fingered, calloused – I love the way they feel on my skin. If we were to bring Voldemort into this, you saved my life from him. Something that I will eternally be grateful for. To use your own words – the way you don't judge me and accept me for my flaws – which I know are that I can be bossy like mum and have a terrible temper." Harry's grin flashed and she laughed. "Or this sexy grin that just turns my insides to mush. You're everything to me, Harry James Potter."

He smiled at her and slid his fingers into her hair, pulling her close for a long, deep kiss. "You're everything to me, Ginevra." He winced when she slapped his arm. "I mean, Ginny. I love you."

She grinned. "I love you, too."

Then she brought her lips back down to his.

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After an hour of some intense snogging, Harry and Ginny said goodnight and headed upstairs to bed as they were leaving in three days to go to Potter Manor for Christmas. He changed into a white tee shirt and some pyjama bottoms before he crawled into bed to think about what had just happened downstairs in the common room. He was in love with Ginny. He hadn't realized it or even suspected what he was feeling until that moment. But he was in love with her. Crazy in love and it felt amazing. They had really only been dating for five months and that may have seemed like it was way too soon but he knew it wasn't. He was in love with Ginny Weasley.

He closed his eyes, happily thinking of his Ginny and he began to dream of their life together. But then the dream changed. His body felt smooth, flexible, powerful and he could feel himself sliding through metal bars. There were vibrant colours ahead in the darkness as he moved closer. He turned his head to enter the corridor and noticed that there was a man slumped over on the floor. Then a

feeling that was very unfamiliar rose up inside of him – he wanted to bite this man, very badly. But he knew that he couldn't because he had important work to do. A silvery cloak slipped off of the man in the darkness and the man jumped to his feet, pulling his wand from his robes. Harry looked up at the man, reared his head and struck once, twice, three times before the man fell to the floor shrieking in pain before he fell silent.

Harry woke up in bed to Ron and Neville shaking him. His hand was pressed to his forehead over his scar which was burning like crazy.

"Harry, are you alright?" Ron asked.

Harry shook his head no as he remembered the dream. "No, Ron I – your dad ... your dad has been attacked by a giant snake."

"What?" Ron asked in confusion.

Harry nodded. "Attacked by a snake. We have to make sure that he's okay."

Neville nodded at Harry. "I'll go get McGonagall."

Neville hurried out of the room and Ron turned to Harry. "Are you sure that it wasn't just a dream, Harry?"

Harry shook his head no again. "No, I was dreaming but then I wasn't and ... you're dad was attacked by a giant snake!"

McGonagall came into the room dressed in her tartan gown and dressing cap. "Potter, what is the meaning of this? Longbottom said you that had some type of dream?"

"It wasn't a dream, Professor," Harry replied. "I saw Mr. Weasley, Ron's dad – he was just attacked by a giant snake!"

"That's preposterous!"

"No, I swear it's true! Someone has to help him."

McGonagall looked at Harry for a moment and then she nodded.  
“Come with me, Potter, you too Weasley.”

Harry and Ron followed McGonagall as they left the dormitories. They were going to Dumbledore’s office. When they approached the door they could hear voices coming from inside, almost as if he was having a meeting but when they entered, Dumbledore was sitting at his desk in his dressing gown by himself and the portraits on the wall were all pretending to be sleeping.

“Albus, it seems Potter here had a dream and –”

“No!” Harry exclaimed angrily. “It wasn’t a dream! I saw Mr. Weasley being bitten by a giant snake!”

Dumbledore didn’t look at Harry; he instead began to examine his fingernails. “How did you see this?”

“I was sleeping and I –”

“No, I mean, were you standing by and watching or were you involved?”

Harry gulped. “I – I was the snake. I saw it from the view of the snake.”

Dumbledore nodded. He then turned to the portraits of the old Headmasters on the wall and asked Dilys and Evervard to raise the alarm and to search for Mr. Weasley. He then turned to Fawkes and asked him to send a warning before he took a silver instrument and tipped it with his wand. The instrument made a strange clinking noise and green smoke rose up from it then the head of a serpent came out from it and Dumbledore began to mutter to it. Then the head split in two and Dumbledore made it go away.

Evervard returned to his portrait and said that he had found Mr. Weasley. He was covered in blood and people were tending to him as he spoke. Dilys returned next to inform them that Mr. Weasley was being taken to St. Mungo’s immediately.



Dumbledore turned to McGonagall. “Minerva, send for the rest of the Weasleys and have them come up to my office immediately.”

McGonagall nodded and rushed out of the office. Ron turned to look at Harry, a dumbstruck look on his face. Dumbledore then proceeded to take out a blackened kettle putting a portkey charm on it and then he turned to Harry and Ron.

“I will be sending you to Grimmauld Place for the time being.”

They waited a few minutes and McGonagall came in with Ginny, Fred, and George. Ginny walked over to Harry and took his hand. “What’s going on? McGonagall said that you saw dad get hurt?”

Harry shook his head. “I’ll – I’ll explain later.”

She nodded as Dumbledore instructed everyone to gather around the kettle. Fawkes flashed back into the office, dropping a feather and Dumbledore sighed.

“It seems Dolores knows that you are out of your beds. Everyone gather round now.”

They all reached out and placed a finger on the kettle. Harry looked up at Dumbledore once more but this time they made eye contact and Harry felt a white searing pain rip through his scar and he felt a sudden intense hatred for the man in front of him. But before he could form any logic around what he had just felt, the jerk at his naval came and he was spiralling away. They landed in a heap in the entrance hall of Grimmauld Place, Ginny falling into his lap.

All four of the Weasleys turned to look at Harry as he made his way into the kitchen.

“What’s going on, Harry?” Fred demanded.

Harry gulped. “I – I was having a dream and then it wasn’t a dream and there was this snake and I saw it bite your dad. I told McGonagall and well it turned out to have actually happened. Your dad is at St. Mungo’s right now.”

Ginny paled and clutched Harry's hand tightly. "Is he okay?"

"I don't know. There was a lot of blood."

Fred, George, and Ron began to pace nervously around the kitchen. Harry reached into his pocket for his mirror and remembered that he had it in his trunk at Hogwarts. He took a seat in the corner of the kitchen as he watched everyone pace.

"We've got to go to St. Mungo's now!" George demanded.

Harry shook his head n. "You can't. Dumbledore sent us here for a reason. You've got to wait until your mum contacts you."

Fred glared at Harry. "He's our bloody father!"

Just then Errol, the Weasleys old owl came flying through the window and George grabbed the note.

**"Your father is at St. Mungo's. The healers are doing everything they can and they tell me that it looks promising. Stay where you are. As soon as your father is out of the woods I will be coming to collect you. Love Mum. Like this helps us!"** George said.

Fred groaned. "That sounds like she's not sure what's going on!"

Ginny sighed, getting up to sit between the twins so that they could hold her close. "We just have to be calm."

"Calm is exactly what you need to be." James replied from the doorway as Sirius and Remus came up from behind him.

"Da, what are you doing here?"

James walked over to pull Harry into his arms. "Dumbledore sent us here to keep an eye on the five of you. What happened?"

Harry quickly explained about his dream again, this time making sure to tell his father that he was the snake. He also mentioned what had

happened with Dumbledore during the portkey.

James nodded. "I don't know how to explain that either. But if it was one of your weird Voldemort vibes then maybe they all can't be bad, right?" Harry only nodded as James draped his arm over his shoulder. "Harry, stop blaming yourself for what happened. You probably saved Arthur's life."

Harry didn't comment. He only stayed sitting next to his father in silence as he watched Ginny cuddled between Fred and George and Ron continue to pace around the room.

After a few hours of silence, Molly Weasley appeared in the kitchen. "He's fine." Everyone stood up at those words. "Bill is sitting with him now. I want everyone to get some sleep and then we'll head over to visit him after lunch." She explained.

Sirius led them all upstairs and pointed out a few bedrooms where they could sleep in. Dobby and Winky had really managed to improve the place even if it was still a bit depressing. He gave everyone their own room, until he was left alone with Harry.

"How are you holding up?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know. I feel like this huge weight's been lifted off my chest but at the same time I feel like it's my fault that this happened because when I saw it, I was the snake."

Sirius nodded. "Listen Harry, it's not your fault. What happened was an accident. Arthur was doing Order business, something that he volunteered for which means that there's nothing that you can do about it, alright?"

"Alright."

Sirius grinned. "Good. Now why don't you get some sleep? Someone will come and wake you up for lunch."

Harry nodded as he stepped into the bedroom that Sirius pointed out, closing the door behind him. But when he climbed into bed, sleep

was the last thing on his mind.

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Ginny came in to wake Harry up a few hours later, even though he hadn't really slept the entire time. She told him that Dumbledore had sent their trunks and he was to get dressed and come downstairs. He was still feeling sorry for himself and then Ginny had stood on her toes to kiss him softly.

"I love you."

He grinned and he felt this warm feeling flood through his body. "I love you too. Thanks Gin."

She smiled. "You're welcome. Now hurry up and get ready."

Harry grabbed a quick shower before he dressed and headed down into the kitchen. James, Sirius, Remus, Tonks, Moody, Molly, Fred, George, Ginny, and Ron were all eating sandwiches at the table. Winky placed a sandwich on the table for Harry and he gave her a small smile. He wasn't really that hungry though and he only picked at what was there. James leaned over to him.

"Hey, eat up a bit, alright."

"I'm not hungry."

James nodded. "Well, try to eat at least half, alright?"

Harry nodded and did as his father asked. Tonks and Moody were apparently bringing them to St. Mungo's so Harry followed the Weasleys out of the house. He was surprised to find that the Marauders were staying.

"Aren't you coming to the hospital?"

James shook his head. "No, we've got some work to do. You go; I'll see you when you get back."

Harry nodded as he fell into step with Tonks. Tonks was really curious about his dream and asked him if he had any Seer blood in his family. Harry only shook his head but he was remembering his father mentioning something about psychic abilities as part of the elementals. But even as he thought about it he knew that he didn't have it. The dream had been something to do with his weird Voldemort vibes.

They took the Knight Bus to a muggle department store called Purge and Dowse Ltd. From there, Tonks spoke to the mannequin in the window and they entered into a large reception area. Molly spoke to the welcome witch who instructed them as to where Arthur was being held. They followed her down to Arthur's hospital room and stepped inside.

Mr. Weasley looked pretty good. He was grinning and simply had one arm wrapped in bandages. He explained that he was fine he just had to keep wearing the bandages for a while because the poison had some type of effect in it that kept him bleeding all the time. So he had to drink lots of Blood-Replenishing potions until that was worked out. He was also a bit excited as the man who was in the room with him had just been bitten by a werewolf and Mr. Weasley had tried to explain to him that he could have a normal life. Remus was actually coming in to speak with him that afternoon.

Molly sent Fred, George, Ginny, Ron, and Harry out of the room for a while so that the adults could talk. Fred and George pulled out these flesh-coloured strings that they had invented during the summer called Extendable Ears. Harry was unsure about listening in at first but Fred told him that since he had saved Arthur's life he had more of a right. So Harry took the string and held it up to his ear.

They were talking about him and the dream that he had had but then he dropped the ear because the last words he heard made his blood run cold. Moody thought that Voldemort was possessing him. The Weasleys all turned to look at Harry and he simply gulped. No one said anything else to him as they returned to Grimmauld Place. Harry headed upstairs, saying that he was tired before he locked himself in the room that he had been given.

*Voldemort was possessing him. Was that why he could feel emotions that weren't his own? And was that way he was dreaming about corridors and about snakes? He lay on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. Maybe that had something to do with the reason why Dumbledore had refused to look at him. Was he afraid that when he looked into Harry's eyes he would see red orbs and not emerald green ones?*

The bedroom door opened up and Harry glanced over to where James and Sirius were standing. "Lo."

James sighed and took a seat on the bed. "You look terrible. Ginny told us what you over heard."

Sirius nodded. "You're not being possessed."

Harry glared at his godfather. "AND HOW THE HELL DO YOU KNOW THAT? HAVE YOU EVER BEEN POSSESSED BEFORE?"

"No, but I have." Ginny replied quietly from the doorway.

Harry looked over at her as she walked over and sat in his lap. "Do you think I'm being possessed?"

"Well, do you have lots of blank spots in your day where you don't remember where you were or what you were doing? Have you ever found yourself in an area completely unsure of how you got there?" Ginny asked.

"No."

Ginny smiled at him. "Then you're not being possessed. Besides, Ron says that you never left your bed. He and Neville saw you thrashing around for a full minute before they managed to wake you up."

Harry nodded. "Really?"

"Yeah, really."

James grinned at his son. "Sirius and I will leave you two alone for a bit. Harry, I think we're going to end up spending Christmas here since it's closer to St. Mungo's. It will make the traveling easier on Molly and I think it will make her feel better to know we're so close."

Harry nodded. "Alright, thanks Da."

James and Sirius left the room and Harry turned back to Ginny. "I'm sorry."

"For what?" Ginny asked quizzically.

"For being a prat."

She grinned. "It's okay. I forgive you ... this time."

He laughed and kissed her softly. "Thanks Gin."

"You're welcome." Then she brought her lips to his.

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## **Chapter 39: Christmas at Grimmauld Place**

**Author's Notes:** please review!!

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### **Chapter XXXIX – Christmas at Grimmauld Place**

Harry was in a much better mood after Ginny helped him come to his senses and made him realize what a prat that he was being. He was kind of sad that they wouldn't be going to Potter Manor for Christmas but he understood that it was closer to St. Mungo's here which was easier for the Weasley family. They had all headed into St. Mungo's to visit Arthur for the afternoon and Harry decided to stay at Grimmauld Place with his family. He was sitting in the kitchen surrounded by James, Remus, and Sirius as they ate the lunch that Winky had prepared for them.

“So, you and Ginny look like you’ve gotten a lot closer since the last time we talked?” Sirius asked as he wiggled his eyebrows suggestively at Harry.

Harry rolled his eyes. “I love her.”

James glanced up at Harry in surprise before he cleared his throat. “Well ... I ... I know that I should be telling you that you’re much too young to even know what love is or that you’re feeling it, but I suppose that that would be a little critical. I was in love with your mother at fifteen.”

Harry grinned. “Yeah, but the difference here is that Ginny loves me back.”

“Brat!” James replied with a laugh, giving Harry a playful cuff on the side of his head.

Sirius laughed. “That was a good one, Harry, and so very true. So when did you realize that you were in love with her?”

Harry shrugged. “I’m not sure to be honest. It just hit me when I was telling her about why I liked her. It was like a sudden realization that I was in love with her.”

James smiled. “It was slower for me. I just thought that I fancied Lily and then one day when she walked into the room, my heart started pounding and she looked over at me. It was then that I realized that I was in love with her and that if I wanted her in my life I had to grow up.”

Sirius looked over at his friend in surprise. “Really? I always wondered why you suddenly had smartened up, became more mature and more responsible. You did all of that for Lily?”

James nodded. “Yeah I did. And when I finally got her and she realized that I really wasn’t that mature she just laughed and threatened to hex me if I pissed her off.”



Sirius shuddered. "And Lily's hexes were something to worry about."

Remus nodded. "She never hexed me."

James grinned. "She thought that you were too sweet."

"Sweet?" Remus asked.

"Yup, sweet."

"Have you ever been in love?" Harry asked Remus and Sirius.

Sirius shook his head. "Real love? Nah, haven't had that unlucky break yet."

"Unlucky?" Harry asked.

Sirius nodded. "Why would I want to go and fall in love? Then the woman will have you thinking about commitment, and marriage and houses with white picket fences. Not for me thanks."

James laughed. "One day you'll change your mind. Lily always said that you'd meet someone who knocked you off your feet and make you want all of that. She also said that you had a heart of pure mush."

"Mush?" Sirius exclaimed, quite obviously offended.

"Yup, mush. She noticed all of this by the way that you acted around Harry when he was a baby."

Sirius seemed to consider this a moment before he shook his head. "Nope, she had no idea what she was talking about."

Remus and James grinned at each other and decided that it was best not to comment.

"What about you, Uncle Remus? Have you ever been in love?"

Remus shook his head. "Love's not in the cards for me."

“Why?” Harry asked.

“Because I’m a werewolf and people in my condition don’t get a happily ever after.”

“That’s the most ridiculous thing that I’ve ever heard.” Tonks replied from the doorway. Her hair was bubblegum pink again and she was staring at Remus, her brown eyes filled with desire and frustration and an emotion that Harry couldn’t quite name. She also looked absolutely furious.

Remus rolled his eyes, before the flash of desire came into his golden brown orbs. “Oh, and why is that?”

“It has nothing to do with your condition and it has everything to do with the fact that you won’t let yourself be happy! You’re afraid and you won’t admit it! You want me and you won’t admit it!” Tonks exclaimed.

Harry, James, and Sirius grinned at each other as Remus’ golden brown eyes darkened.

“So what if I’m attracted to you, Tonks? I’m attracted to a lot of women! Does that mean that I’m supposed to jump into bed with whoever crooks their finger at me? Well, I don’t want to and you need to get used to that fact!”

Tonks rolled her eyes. “Oh, you want to, Remus. But you’ve built up these stupid walls around yourself and you won’t let anyone in! You’re too afraid to feel something and have it taken away from you. Well, too bad! It’s a tough world we live in and there are no guarantees, especially on something like love!”

“Yeah, well, good thing that I’m not in love with anyone then right?”

“Oh please, Remus! You’re so in love with me that you can’t think straight! But your stupid male ego is overpowering that emotion and you won’t let yourself feel it! You won’t give us a chance!”

“I’M A BLOODY WEREWOLF, TONKS!” Remus exploded. “WHAT

PART OF THAT DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? A WEREWOLF! WEREWOLVES DON'T HAVE NORMAL RELATIONSHIPS! WHAT IF SOMETHING HAPPENED AND I ENDED UP HURTING YOU IN SOME WAY? HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED HOW I WOULD FEEL IN THAT SITUATION? I'M A DANGER FOR PEOPLE TO BE AROUND!"

"THAT'S BLOODY RIDICULOUS AND YOU KNOW IT! YOU LIVED WITH JAMES AND HARRY FOR THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS AND DID YOU EVER HURT HARRY? OR DID YOU EVER HURT JAMES? YOU WERE LIVING WITH AN INNOCENT LITTLE CHILD THAT YOU COULD HAVE HURT AT ANYTIME IF YOU'RE SUCH A MONSTER YET HE'S STANDING HERE NOW ALMOST FULLY GROWN AND HE'S PERFECTLY FINE! BEING A WEREWOLF HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS! I KNOW THAT YOU'RE A WEREWOLF AND I DON'T CARE!" Tonks yelled back.

Remus' eyes darkened and he pursed his lips before yelling back at her. "WELL, I CARE, TONKS! I CARE THAT I'M A WEREWOLF! AND BESIDES, I'M TOO DAMN FUCKING OLD FOR YOU! YOU SHOULD GO FIND A MAN NEAR YOUR OWN AGE! I'M THIRTY-THREE YEARS OLD! THAT'S ALMOST TEN FUCKING YEARS OLDER THEN YOU! I'M TOO DAMN OLD, SO LEAVE ME THE HELL ALONE!"

Tonks shook her head. "No, I can't. I love you." Then she hurried across the room, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him.

Harry watched as Remus lifted his arms as if he was going to push her away but then he dragged her closer instead. Harry, James, and Sirius all quietly left the room.

Remus pulled back and looked into Tonks' brown eyes. "This is your last chance Nymphadora. Have you even listened to a word I said? I'm too old for you. I'm a werewolf."

Tonks ran her fingers through his thick brown hair streaked with grey. "You don't sound very convincing and I don't care. I love you, Remus."

Remus sighed and placed his forehead against hers. "Damn it, I love you, too."

Tonks grinned. "See? You can fall in love." Then she pulled him close and kissed him again.

***Meanwhile, in the living room ...***

Sirius grinned over at James. "I knew that Tonks would wear him down eventually. She's more stubborn than a hard-headed mule."

James nodded. "She's good for him. And I think that he needs her more than anything. Moony has never let anyone in before and Tonks has had him pegged since the beginning. Something has been simmering between them since the beginning. I'm surprised that it's actually taken that long for them to get their act together. Besides, have you seen those two fight? They can give Ron and Hermione a run for their money."

Harry laughed. "I don't know. It's been what six months, since those two met before they got together. Ron and Hermione have been five years and they're still not together."

James laughed. "Give them time. Some of us are little slow at these things."

Sirius grinned. "Or some of us are more stubborn than others at these things."

Harry grinned. "Are you thinking about Professor O'Bryan?"

Sirius nodded. "She still won't give me a chance. But I've got a really good Christmas gift planned for her."

Harry laughed. "I think that you did well with the puppy. Even while she was cursing you and telling me to tell you to stop, she had a sappy look in her eyes whenever she mentioned the puppy. And naming the puppy Padfoot?"

Sirius grinned. "What? If she won't take me at least she can accept

my alter ego?”

James laughed. “And you wonder why she won’t go out with you.”

Sirius tossed a pillow at James. “Hey! I think that I should be offended by that.”

James grinned and turned to Harry. “Oh, Harry, I’ve been meaning to mention this to you and I keep forgetting. But you know how we’ve been working with your magical powers and building up your power in that area? Well, I’ve been thinking that we should now work on building you up physically.”

Sirius nodded. “Yeah, in case you haven’t noticed, you’re a skinny little brat.”

Harry grinned. “I’m not that skinny. And I do have good muscles from Quidditch.”

James nodded. “Yes, I’ve noticed, but we need to make you a bit stronger. Now you took all of those fighting classes when you were younger and I know that you remember most of them as Sirius told me about how you fought him off quite well in the Shrieking Shack two years ago. So I know that you can defend yourself if you lose your wand but you still need to work on being a bit stronger. So I was thinking that we could devise a work-out routine for you to start after the holidays.”

Harry nodded. “Sure, sounds good to me. What did you have in mind?”

“Well,” James replied. “I was thinking that you’ve always been a pretty good runner, so why don’t you run a few kilometres every morning? The Black Lake at Hogwarts is three kilometres all around. If you ran around the lake every morning I think that that would be good. Besides, Hagrid always has a nice neat path shovelled all around the lake so that you won’t have to run through the snow.”

“That sounds good. I’ve never had a problem running. I think that I could do that.” He actually had been meaning to start running. He

remembered that on his way to the second task he had decided to start running but it had never happened. He grinned to himself, well, there was no better time to start than the present.

“Good. Also, I was thinking that maybe to work on your arms you might want to do some push-ups and to work on your abs some sit-ups.” James explained. “The Room of Requirement could actually supply you with any type of muggle exercise machine that you were looking for if you were interested. I’m thinking run every morning and do maybe twenty push-ups and sit-ups every day but only head into the exercise room say about three times a week. And then as part of your lessons on Sundays, Sirius, Remus, and I can fight with you a bit to test your strength physically, which will also help you renew those fighting lessons a bit. What do you think?”

Harry nodded. “I think I can handle that.”

James grinned. “Good.”

They heard the front door open and Sirius grinned. “Sounds like everyone’s back. Let’s go find out what’s going on with Arthur.”

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When Christmas morning finally came, Harry was woken up by Dobby shaking him awake and telling him to go downstairs with everyone else. He fumbled for his glasses before he brushed his teeth and headed downstairs. The Weasleys, Hermione (who had arrived the day before saying that she didn’t enjoy skiing as much as her parents did), James, Remus, and Sirius were sitting around the Christmas tree.

“Always last, eh Harry?” Sirius asked.

Harry shrugged. “It wasn’t intentional.”

They began to hand out gifts and Harry grinned as he opened his gifts up. From Hermione he got a homework planner and when he looked over at Ron’s disgusted face he could only grin as he had gotten the same thing. Ron had given him a Broom Compass which

was supposed to help him find his way. From James, Sirius, and Remus he got a set of twenty books on Defence Against the Dark Arts and teaching them. He found himself already figuring out ways to teach them to the DA. Hagrid gave Harry a wallet with fangs which was supposed to prevent thievery but it almost took his finger off as well so he wasn't sure how he was supposed to use it. Tonks gave him a mini model of a Firebolt. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley gave him his usual jumper and care package. Neville had sent him a few new novels by his favourite authors. Last but not least, he opened the package from Ginny. She had given him a new red jumper, two novels that he had remembered eyeing with interest during their last Hogsmeade trip, and a chocolate frog card. Or what he thought was a chocolate frog card until he looked closer.

The card had a picture of himself on the front in his Quidditch robes and on the back in Ginny's neat writing it read:

### **Harry Potter:**

**Harry James Potter, current of Earl of Glasgow, born 31st July, 1980, otherwise known as the Boy Who Lived. Potter is known for defeating Lord Voldemort when he was fifteen months old; for rescuing the Philosopher's Stone when he was eleven; for becoming the youngest Quidditch player in over a century at eleven; for rescuing Ginevra Weasley from the Chamber of Secrets when he was twelve; for helping Sirius Black escape when he was thirteen; for clearing Black's name, winning the Tri-Wizard Tournament, and escaping Lord Voldemort again when he was fourteen; and for most importantly just being Harry. In his spare time he likes to read, play chess, play exploding snap, play Quidditch, and hang out with his girlfriend, Ginny Weasley.**

**Made by Ginevra M. Weasley**

Harry grinned as he looked down upon it. It was meant as a joke and he knew it since he and Ginny had recently been talking about chocolate frog cards and Ginny had mentioned that she was surprised that he didn't have his own card yet.

“Thanks Gin.”

She grinned. “I couldn’t resist.”

He laughed and turned to see what everyone else had received. For Ginny he had sent her a dozen of all of her favourite flowers again that morning and he knew that they were all upstairs in her room at the moment. But he had also given her something he knew that she had been bugging Molly and Arthur about for the last two years; a kitten.

She was black, soft, and beautiful. She was also only three weeks old and so incredibly tiny with bright green eyes. He made sure that Ginny also had all the proper supplies to take care of her. He could only smile when her face lit up at the sight before her.

“Oh, Harry,” she gasped as she cradled the tiny kitten in her arms.

He grinned. “I know that you’ve wanted a kitten forever so I saw her and I just thought she was perfect.”

Ginny nodded. “Does she have a name yet?”

Harry shook his head. “Nope, you get to name her.”

She grinned as she looked at the kitten. “Hmm ... a name ...” She was silent for a few minutes and then she grinned. “What about Midnight because she’s as dark as midnight?”

Harry grinned. “I think it’s good.”

Ginny reached over to kiss him softly. “Thank you, Harry.”

He grinned. “No problem.”

\*\*\*\*\*

The holidays seemed to be going only too quickly for Harry and soon it was the day before he had to return to school. He headed down the



stairs and into the kitchen and stopped in his tracks when he found James, Sirius, and Snape all standing in the kitchen glaring at each other. He cleared his throat.

“Um ... hi. Molly said that you wanted to see me.”

James nodded. “Yeah, sit down, Harry, we need to talk.”

Harry nodded and took a seat in between James and Sirius as Snape sat down across from them. “What’s going on?”

“Wait patiently, Potter!” Snape snapped.

James glared at him. “He’s only curious, you prat. Now get to the point.”

Snape sneered at James. “Potter, it seems that Dumbledore has decided that in the light of recent events it would be in your best interest to learn Occulmency.”

“What’s that?”

Snape rolled his eyes. “Occulmency is learning how to block out your mind from penetrating forces.”

Harry looked up at James before he spoke. “But I thought that I wasn’t being possessed.”

“You’re not, Harry,” James replied. “But that scar on your forehead, Dumbledore believes that it is somehow connecting you to Voldemort and his emotions so he wants you to try to block it out.”

Harry nodded. “But it’s been useful so far, right? I mean, otherwise I wouldn’t have known about Mr. Weasley.”

James nodded. “Yes, but if Voldemort finds out about this connection he might try to use it against you or possibly plant images in your brain. Therefore it is extremely important that you learn how to do Occulmency.”

“Oh. So who’s going to teach me then?”

Snape pressed his lips together as he looked up at Harry in disgust. “I am.”

Harry’s mouth dropped open in shock. “What? Why? Why can’t Dumbledore teach me?”

Snape rolled his eyes. “Trust me, Potter, I did not beg for this job. Dumbledore doesn’t have time to teach you and I seem to be the only other person properly qualified to do so. You will meet me in my office Wednesday evening at precisely eight o’clock. You can tell others that you are taking remedial potions. That’ll be all.” He stood up to leave and Sirius and James both reached out to grab his arm.

“If I hear that you are using these lessons to hurt Harry in any way, you’ll answer to me.” James replied coldly.

“And me.” Sirius replied.

Snape only sneered. “I see that neither one of you have changed in the least. Good day.”

He stormed out of the room as Harry stared up at his father and godfather in horror. “Extra lessons with Snape? What did I do to deserve this?”

Sirius laughed. “Sorry about the choice of teacher, Harry, but learning Occulmency is really important, okay?”

Harry nodded. “Alright.”

James grinned. “Good, now why don’t you go tell your friends about this wonderful news?”

“Sure, and not wonderful – dreadful.”

James laughed. “I so agree.”

Harry left the kitchen, heading upstairs, again wondering – why

Snape?

\*\*\*\*\*

Later on that afternoon, Mr. Weasley arrived at Grimmauld Place. He was finally released from St. Mungo's and had been declared completely cured. Everyone celebrated this news with a huge party and good dinner that evening since they would be returning to school the following day.

Tonks and Remus took them on the Knight Bus the next morning to head back to Hogwarts and Harry was pleased to see the two of them sitting close together, holding hands. Remus looked truly happy, something that Harry could honestly claim that he had never seen him look before. They arrived in front of the gates and Tonks told Harry to practice Occulmency, warning him how important it was that he learnt it. He only nodded and said goodbye before taking Ginny's hand in his as they headed back into the castle, dreading the idea of returning to a castle that had Umbridge.

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## Chapter 40: Occulmency and Lexy

**Author's Notes:** the good old Beach Boys own it sry! pease review!  
P.S. - thanks to pesypetunia for some ideas.

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## Chapter XL - Occulmency and Lexy

Classes started up pretty normally and Harry was already itching to return to Grimmauld Place. Umbridge had hardly gotten any better and Harry was continuing to tune her out whenever possible. He would think about what he was planning for his next DA lesson or he would think about Ginny. Both always made him feel so much better.

But it was Ancient Runes class that he was most anxious to get back to. Harry was dying of curiosity over what Sirius had gotten

Professor O'Bryan for Christmas. He was sure that whatever it was, it was definitely amazing and she would not be too happy about it. She was incredibly stubborn when it came to Sirius and Harry had a feeling that their relationship would all come down the same way that Remus and Tonks had – in an argument. However, when Harry got to O'Bryan's classroom, she never mentioned anything about it and he figured it might be safer not to push.

Finally, Wednesday evening arrived, the evening that Harry had been dreading – an evening with Snape. He stepped into the office for his first Occulmency lesson and was surprised to see Dumbledore's pensive sitting on the desk.

"Close the door, Potter."

Harry did as he asked but when he heard the click on the door he couldn't help but feel like he was locking himself in.

"So why am I learning Occulmency again?"

Snape sneered. "You will call me sir or professor at all times, Potter."

"Right, um Professor, why am I learning Occulmency again?"

Snape rolled his eyes as if this question wasn't even worth his time. "To protect yourself against the Dark Lord, Potter. The Dark Lord is a supreme Legilimens which is why Occulmency is so important. You do know what Legilimency is, right?"

Harry nodded, glad that Ginny had told him about that a few years before. Legilimency was the ability to read minds or to extract feelings and memories from a person's mind. "Yes, sir."

"Good."

"But sir, if Voldemort is so good at reading people's minds then what's preventing him from reading my mind right now?" Harry asked.

Snape sneered. "Because, you stupid boy, like anything else this type of magic needs a certain amount of eye contact! We are inside of a

castle dungeon safe because time and space matter in magic! The walls of Hogwarts are guided by many ancient spells and wards! The Dark Lord cannot penetrate your mind in here!"

"Well, then why do I have to learn Occulmency if Voldemort can't get to me from in here?"

"Because you seem to be different, Potter! That wretched scar on your forehead that the Dark Lord gave to you somehow connects you to him. You need to learn how to protect your mind from him." Snape explained. "That night that you dreamed about the snake? The Dark Lord became aware of your connection for the first time that night. You saw what happened through the snake's eyes. Now that he knows about the connection he will possibly try to use it to get to you. Do you understand?"

Harry nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Good."

Harry watched as Snape brought his wand to his head and carefully began to remove memories from his mind, placing them into the pensieve. Harry wondered what the memories were that Snape was hiding from him.

"Close your eyes, Potter, and block your mind from mine. On three."

"Wait! How do I block my mind?" Harry asked.

"By not wanting me in it. Three! Legilimens!" Snape called out.

Harry felt a light pressing of something on his brain and then images from his past began to slide through his brain: Uncle Vernon beating him with a belt; Aunt Marge's dog Ripper chasing him up a tree; James punching Uncle Vernon; James reading him bed time stories; the Christmas he got Foolish; the Sorting Hat; seeing Ginny lying in the Chamber of Secrets; the argument between Sirius and James before Sirius moved in; Harry and Ginny in the garden laughing and tickling each other and then Harry moving in to kiss her and – no! That memory was private and he didn't want Snape to see that.

He managed to break the invasion in his mind and he saw Snape rubbing his wrist where an ugly welt was.

“Did you mean to use the Stinging Hex?”

Harry gave Snape a bewildered look. “No.”

Snape nodded. “Interesting. You let me in too far. You let me see too much. You must not let me in at all. You must repel me with your mind and not resort to using your wand. Got it?”

Harry nodded and before he could even concentrate on blocking his mind, Snape had called out ‘Legilimens’ again.

Harry felt the same thing happen. An invasion in his mind as memories flashed through: Uncle Vernon locking him in the cupboard under the stairs; Remus teaching him how to play catch; James showing him how to fly a broomstick; the dragon from the Tri-Wizard tournament; Cedric dying; Voldemort rising from the potion; the corridor leading to the Department of Mysteries at the Ministry.

Harry snapped himself back and shook the thoughts from his mind. The Department of Mysteries? How did he suddenly know where that familiar corridor led? “Sir? What’s in the Department of Mysteries?”

Snape paled slightly. “What did you say?”

“I said: what’s in the Department of Mysteries? Sir?”

“It’s none of your business, Potter, and I want you to remember that. Why did you see that corridor?” Snape asked.

Harry shrugged. “I’ve been dreaming about it on and off for a while now, since the summer I think.”

“You need to stop dreaming about it. Practice blocking your mind. You’re dismissed.” Snape replied coldly.

Harry nodded and walked out of Snape’s office, rubbing his hand

over his head. His scar was pounding and he knew that it didn't have anything to do with Voldemort but because of the assault that Snape had just placed on his mind. He was concentrating on rubbing his head and staring at the ground so he didn't realize that there was anyone in front of him until he walked into them. He looked up and grinned at Professor O'Bryan.

"Sorry, Professor."

O'Bryan smiled. "It's alright. But you better watch where you're going."

Harry nodded. "Professor ... did you like what Uncle Sirius got you for Christmas?"

Her smile faded. "He's not going to give up is he?"

Harry shook his head. "I don't think so."

She sighed. "You know, he still sends me flowers every day and every night and once a week I've been getting scrolls with famous love songs or love poems written on them. And not to mention long letters telling me all about himself and asking questions about me. And as to Padfoot – did you know that that's his nickname?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah I did. I thought that it was funny that he would name the puppy he gave you after himself."

She nodded. "Yes well, he sent me a note saying that Padfoot was his alter ego and that if he couldn't sleep in my bed then at least the puppy could. I mean, have you ever heard anything so bold?"

Harry snorted out a laugh and she glared at him.

"You find this amusing, don't you?"

He grinned. "I can't help it! He obviously really likes you. Why don't you just give him a chance?"

She sighed. "Tonks told me the same thing. I went to school with her,

you know. We're pretty good friends now that we're both in the Order. She said that his bark is worse than his bite and that he might be a prat but he's a Marauder at heart. I wasn't sure exactly what she meant by that but she's in love so she might just be at that stage where she wants everyone to be as happy as she is."

Harry nodded. "He likes you a lot, Professor. And to be honest, I have no idea what he sent you for Christmas. He just told me to wait and see and that you would really get a kick out of it."

O'Bryan nodded. "He sent me a singing locket."

Harry glanced at her in confusion. "A singing locket?"

She nodded. "It's the most ridiculous thing ever! When I see him I'm going to ... do you know where he's going to be on Sunday?"

Harry nodded. "Order Headquarters. Why?"

O'Bryan shook her head. "Nothing. I need to end this once and for all. He's absolutely ridiculous. Well, I'm off to bed now, Harry, I was just out for a cup of hot coco. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Professor."

Harry watched her go, wondering what Sirius was going to pull out of his bag of tricks next if she continued to be so stubborn. He headed up to the common room, his head still pounding. He took a seat in his favourite armchair and Ginny came over to sit on his lap.

"How did it go?"

He shook his head and then moaned at the pain the movement inflicted on him. "Horrible. My head feels like there are a million knives stabbing themselves into my brain."

Ginny kissed his forehead and gently ran her finger over his scar, tracing it gently and then rubbing. Harry's head fell back in pleasure as her fingers massaged his temples.



“That feels so good,” he murmured.

She smiled and continued what she was doing until he was sleeping soundly in the chair, oblivious to Fred and George’s show of their latest inventions – Headless Hats. She cuddled back against him, wrapping his arms around her and wondered just what had happened in the meeting with Snape. She had never seen him look so exhausted. He had only been in there for an hour.

Hermione sat down across from them. “Did he say how it went?”

Ginny nodded. “Horrible. His head was killing him. I massaged his temples a bit and he fell right to sleep. He’s exhausted.”

Hermione nodded. “Well, the common room should be clearing out pretty soon. For now, just let him sleep there.”

Ginny smiled. “I was going to.”

Hermione glanced over at Fred and George. “Those hats are clever. It’s obviously an Invisibility spell but it’s been expanded past the object somehow. How did they get so few O.W.L.s?”

Ginny shrugged. “Mostly because they don’t care. They know exactly what they plan to do and how to do it. They really are quite brilliant you know.”

Hermione nodded. “I suppose. Well, I’m going to head up to bed for the evening. Goodnight, Ginny.”

“Goodnight,” Ginny replied as she stayed cuddled close to Harry. She could feel his even breathing as he slept soundly and she smiled. She was just glad that she had made him feel a bit better. Even if she was still unsure as to what exactly had happened in Snape’s dungeons.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry woke up a few hours later to find Ginny still snuggled in his arms. He blinked a bit to bring the room into focus until he realized

that he was no longer wearing his glasses. He found them on the table next to them and slipped them on. Ginny's eyes fluttered open at the movement.

"Hey, how are you feeling?"

He shrugged. "Alright. My head isn't pounding so much. I think that you have magical fingers."

She laughed and reached up to kiss him softly. "Maybe I do. Come on it's after one; we should head up to bed now."

He grinned. "What, you don't want to sleep here with me?"

Ginny smiled at him. "Hmm as much as I'd like to, I think that I prefer a bed to a chair."

Harry sighed. "I sadly agree." He stood up after Ginny, clutching his head as pain rang through his scar and a cry of maniacal laughter came from his mouth and rushed through his mind.

"Harry, what is it?" Ginny asked, her voice filled with concern.

He shook his head until the pain subsided and then he looked up at her. "I think that Voldemort is extremely happy about something."

"What?"

He shrugged. "I have no idea. But it can't be good."

\*\*\*\*\*

The next morning they figured out why Voldemort was so happy. The *Daily Prophet* front page showed a mass outbreak from Azkaban prison. Several known Death Eaters were now on the loose: Antonin Dolohov who was convicted of the murder of Gideon and Fabian Prewett; Augustus Rookwood who was convicted for leaking Ministry secrets to Voldemort; Bellatrix and Rudolphus Lestrage who were convicted for torturing Frank and Alice Longbottom into insanity; as well as many others.

Hermione glanced at Harry when he was done reading. "Frank and Alice Longbottom, are those Neville's parents?"

Harry looked at Hermione in surprise, uneasy at the question. He had promised Neville never to reveal that information. "Why would you say that?"

Hermione shrugged. "Well, I've always wondered what happened to his parents, I mean, he does live with his grandmother."

Harry nodded. "Well, you'll have to ask him now, won't you?"

"Ask who what?" Neville asked as he sat down to breakfast.

Harry took the newspaper from his plate and handed it to Neville. "I think that you should read this, mate."

Neville's eyes widened in anger as he read what was there. "I'll kill them. If I ever ... I'll kill them."

Harry shook his head. "I know you want to, Nev, but right now that's not the thing that you should be thinking of."

Neville nodded and he glanced over at Hermione. "I understand your question now, Hermione. Yes, those are my parents."

Ron gulped. "Are they – dead?"

Hermione elbowed him. "Ron! Don't be rude! How can you be so tactless?"

Neville shook his head. "No, they're not dead."

Harry placed a comforting hand on Neville's shoulder. "They're insane. The Lestranges used the Cruciatus on them and tortured them into insanity. They live at St. Mungo's."

Hermione gasped and placed a hand over her mouth in shock. "Oh Neville, I'm so sorry."

Neville nodded. "It's okay. I think that I'm going to head class. Bye guys."

Ginny placed a comforting hand on Neville's shoulder, not knowing what to say. He gave her a small smile as he left the Great Hall.

"That's so horrible, I can't even imagine."

Harry nodded. "Yeah it is," But he was no longer paying attention to the conversation. His mind had drifted off to how the Marauders were reacting to the new mass break out.

\*\*\*\*\*

When Harry arrived at Grimmauld Place the following Sunday he was anxious to see Sirius. He had been waiting patiently all week to tell Sirius in person about his conversation with O'Bryan. He wanted to know a bit more about this singing locket that she had been commenting on. He also wanted to warn Sirius that she seemed determined to break it off with him – or try to anyway. Harry knew that Sirius was much too stubborn, at least until she gave him a chance. But he never got the chance to ask him.

He had just stepped into the kitchen when the front door slammed shut and he winced as Mrs. Black's picture (which nobody had yet managed to get off the wall) began to scream. He turned to see who had caused all the noise as James and Sirius looked at each other from their spot at the kitchen table while Remus continued to lean against the door jamb with a slightly amused expression on his face. He grinned when he recognized Professor O'Bryan as she stormed into the room. Her blonde hair was waving madly in the air behind her because of how fast she had come in. Her green eyes were sparkling with anger.

"Professor, what are you doing here?" He asked.

O'Bryan looked down at Harry before she glared at Sirius. "What is the meaning of this, Black?" She demanded as she pulled out a gold locket from her pocket. "What kind of gift is this? Are you trying to

piss me off?"

The locket was heart shaped and outlined in diamonds. She opened it up and there was a picture of her on one side and Sirius on the other. The picture of Sirius was making kissing faces at her. But that wasn't the good part, the good part was that the locket was singing, loudly, and badly in Sirius' voice:

*Wouldn't it be nice if we were older  
Then we wouldn't have to wait so long,  
And wouldn't it be nice to live together  
In the kind of world where we belong.*

*You know it's gonna make it that much better  
When we can say goodnight and stay together.*

*Wouldn't it be nice if we could wake up  
In the morning when the day is new,  
And after having spent the day together  
Hold each other close the whole night through.*

*Happy times together we've been spending,  
I wish that every kiss was never-ending,  
Wouldn't it be nice?*

*Maybe if we think and wish and hope and pray it might come true,  
Baby then there wouldn't be a single thing we couldn't do,  
We could be married,  
And then we'd be happy.*

*Wouldn't it be nice?*

*You know it seems the more we talk about it  
It only makes it worse to live without it,  
But lets talk about it,  
Wouldn't it be nice?*

When it was finished it would start all over again until someone slammed it shut.

“Well?” O’Bryan demanded. “What do you have to say for yourself?”

Sirius stood up, winking at James and Remus. He walked over to O’Bryan so that he was standing in front of her. He licked his lips and then grinned at her. “Lexy, all I can say is – *Wouldn’t it be nice if we could wake up in the morning when the day is new? And after having spent the day together hold each other close the whole night through?*” He sang cheerfully with a big sloppy grin on his face.

“*Happy times together we’ve been spending,*” Remus and James belted out together making Harry burst into hysterical laughter. “Come on, Harry!”

Harry grinned. “*I wish that every kiss was never-ending.*”

“*Wouldn’t it be nice maybe if we think and wish and hope and pray it might come true? Baby then there wouldn’t be a single thing we couldn’t do.*” Sirius belted out as he began to snap his fingers to the beat. “*We could be married and then we’d – mmphf.*”

Sirius’ singing was stopped by Lexy’s lips. Her arms had slipped around his neck and her lips were pressed close up against his. She tasted just like he remembered, a refreshing taste of citrus as the explosions went off in his brain all over again. She pulled away and Sirius stared at her in surprise. Then he yanked her close, spun her into a dance and dipped her down to kiss her again.

She grinned, laughing when he pulled her back up. “You’re an absolute idiot. And God help me, I can’t resist you any more.” Then she leaned forward and kissed him again. “Prat! Jerk! Idiot!”

He laughed and yanked her closer. “See? I knew that you couldn’t resist me.”

“And let’s add stubborn and mule-headed as well and what about-mmphf,” she fell silent as Sirius’ lips met hers once more.

Harry, Remus, and James quietly slipped out of the room.

Her hands slid into those thick dark shaggy locks that fell around his face as his hands rested comfortably on her waist. Her only thought was why had she been pushing him away and at the same time she wondered where he had been her entire life. She felt safe in his arms and she felt like she was home.

She moaned gently when he pulled away. "This is hopeless."

He grinned. "No, it's perfect. I knew that you'd come to your senses eventually."

Lexy laughed. "You know if you just asked me out like a normal person I might have considered it but you didn't even know me and the next thing I know you're kissing me in the middle of Umbitch's office."

Sirius grinned. "And you loved every second of it."

She grinned and pouted. "I did not."

Sirius gently twisted one of her golden locks around his finger. "You did and you want me to kiss you again right now."

Lexy smiled at him a glint of mischief in her eyes. "Maybe." Then her smile widened when his mouth met hers again and her only thought was – at last.

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## Chapter 41: All on a Sunday

**Author's Notes:** I just spent the last 3 days editing and adding more to the last 40 chapters - i added a few more J/L scenes in chapters one and 2 for anyone interested in going back to read them. i hope u enjoy the next chapter. please review!

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## **Chapter XLI – All on a Sunday**

Harry grinned at James and Remus when he stepped into the living room at Grimmauld Place. "I guess Sirius finally wore her down."

James laughed. "The Beach Boys. Damn, Sirius is hilarious sometimes! I would have loved to see her face when she opened that thing."

Remus grinned. "And did you see her face when we started singing along with him? She was looking at us like we were all insane."

Harry laughed. "Can you blame her? I was practically cracking a rib."

James smirked. "Hey, you sang along too and if I do say so myself it didn't take much persuading!"

"It's a good song!"

Remus laughed. "Okay, so now we've got Tonks and I, Sirius and Lexy, Harry and Ginny, so James – where's your girl?"

James grinned. "Hmm. Besides, it's about time you two found someone to make you happy. Tonks is amazing and so perfect for you."

Remus blushed a bit as he grinned. "Yeah, she's so great. I hate myself for being so stubborn for so long."

James snorted. "Well, I knew that was coming. I'm just glad that she finally made you see some sense! Anyway, let's get off the topic of everyone's love life or my lack of a love life and instead move into the actual reason we're here. Starting with Snape. How did the first Occulmency lesson go?"

Harry shrugged. "Okay. No, that's a lie. It was horrible."

Remus' brow wrinkled slightly. "Horrible? What happened?"

Harry sighed as he took a seat in the chair. "Snape didn't help me at



all! We talked a bit about why I was taking it and Snape said that Voldemort is a supreme Legilimens which is why it's so important and also that because of my scar I'm more connected to him and his emotions. Then, when we actually started the lesson he didn't even tell me how to block my mind! I asked him how I was supposed to defend myself and he said just keep him out of my mind! Like what kind of advice is that!"

James' eyes darkened. "He's not telling you how to block your mind? So what's he doing?"

"Just invading my mind. He points his wand at me and goes 'Legilimens!' It's the weirdest feeling! It's like someone is pushing on my mind and then all of these memories start sliding through my brain like a slide show and he can see almost all of them. I managed to kick him out of mind eventually but I have no idea how I did it. I used the Stinging Hex on him and all he said was not to use my wand but my mind." Harry explained. "And then my head was pounding so badly afterwards. It was terrible and I could barely stand upright. Ginny rubbed my temples for a while and I fell asleep. It was exhausting!"

Remus nodded. "I can imagine. Severus is obviously not teaching you properly."

Harry nodded. "Why can't one of you guys teach me Occulmency?"

James sighed. "Because we don't know it, Harry. Only Snape and Dumbledore can practice Occulmency which is why Snape is teaching you. Look, talk to Dumbledore about the lessons. If the next one goes just as badly then you're not going to be learning with Snape until he gets his act together. Got it?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah. Da I was wondering, my elementals, do you think that they could help me block my mind?"

James looked thoughtful for a moment. "You know I never thought about that. They just might be able too. There are some books at the Manor on Occulmency, why don't we head there and you can read up a bit on the blocking of the mind. Once you understand the concept

you might be able to get your elementals to help you out. It would certainly show Snivelis if you picked up on it quickly, eh?"

Harry grinned. "Sounds good to me."

James grinned. "Alright then. Let's head into the kitchen so we can floo out."

Remus nodded. "I'll come with you. I don't want to stay here by myself."

James laughed. "Well, Padfoot and Lexy are here."

Remus snorted as they stepped into the kitchen. "Yeah, and they look real interested in my company."

Sirius had Lexy pressed back against the kitchen wall. His hands were sitting comfortably on her hips and her hands were in his hair as they snogged passionately. Both of them were completely oblivious to the fact that the three of them had come into the room.

Harry grinned. "Yeah, I don't think that they want you here, Uncle Moony."

Remus grinned as the three of them flooed to Potter Manor. Maddy and Mickey came into the entrance hall when they arrived.

"Harry! What a surprise to see you here!" Mickey exclaimed as Maddy nodded next to him.

Harry grinned. "Hello. We just came to get some books from the library."

Maddy smiled. "Of course. James, Kingsley left a message for you as well. He is liking you to go into work two hours earlier tomorrow."

James nodded. "Thanks, Maddy. I'll make sure I'm awake."

They headed into the library and James headed over to the list of books on the pedestal in the centre of the room. This book was

incredibly clever. Miriam Potter, the wife of Charles Potter, had developed the system two hundred years earlier. When a new book arrived in the library it would be the owner's job to add it to the list under its proper category. Then when someone was looking for a book they just had to open the catalogue system and write on the first page the subject that they were looking for. A list of books that discussed that subject would then appear and the books in the library would then glow blue so that you could easily find them on the shelves. Harry remembered when he had showed this to Hermione and she had been in awe and in absolute heaven. He had been afraid that she would never leave the room.

James found three books on Occulmency and he quickly took them out. They made themselves comfortable in the armchairs and each of them began to flip through the books. Harry spoke first.

"I think I found something here, Da. It says: *When learning Occulmency the first thing to make sure you accomplish is to properly block your mind from penetrating forces. When it comes to blocking your mind there are three main steps to be done. Step one: Dividing your memories. This means that you must go through every memory that you have and place them in their own proper categories or boxes in your mind. Your brain should then become a storage unit and will filter the memories as you see fit. For example, you might have one category labelled work, school, family, friends, dreams, etc. The categories can be divided any way that you seem fit. Once the categories have been made in your mind and all of your memories have been properly stored away it is important for you to practice storing new information into the proper categories or sub-categories. Then you must learn how to block. Step two: Blocking your mind. Now that your categories have been made you must build walls around each of them. The walls are materials of your own choice and will keep everyone but yourself out of your mind. Step three: Blocking your mind from other people. Once your categories have been divided and your walls are built you must then work on keeping them strong and keeping them up so that no one will penetrate your mind. Once these three easy steps are accomplished you will know how to do Occulmency.*" Harry read out loud.

Remus shook his head no at this. "Okay, but it doesn't explain for you

how to do this. There are a lot of memories in your mind. How are you supposed to go through all of them like that?"

Harry shrugged. "It doesn't really explain so well."

James nodded. "Well, that doesn't help us. This book here says that when it comes to doing that category thing *you must close your eyes and place yourself under a deep trance of meditation. While under this trance you should be able to focus on each individual memory and work on dividing them properly.* But again, it doesn't say specifically how and it sounds like it could take forever."

"So what am I going to do?" Harry asked.

Remus shrugged as he flipped through the book that he had. "Well this one explains a bit better. It says: *When working on categorizing your mind you must start with something simple like family. Then you close your eyes and remember your family. The memories will fall into place the more that you remember. Once you think that you have everything you move onto something else like friends. More memories from other categories might jump out at you during other times but eventually you will have a divider.* This makes a lot more sense."

"I think that I could do that," Harry replied. "I guess I'll need a bit of quiet time though to work on that dividing and categorizing thing."

James nodded. "Yeah. You might be able to do it faster though, Harry. Remember that the elementals can help you. If you want to make a category listed family then you can just ask the elementals to bring forth the memories that you need. It would probably be done a lot faster and probably just in a couple of hours."

Harry grinned. "They work really fast! If I started today I could probably have all of my memories categorized by the end of the day. The elementals are crazy like that!"

James laughed. "True. Alright, well, we won't go into lessons today then. Remus and I will leave you alone in here so that you can start working on step one. Once that's all done we'll see about getting the

elementals to help you on the Occulmency itself.”

Harry grinned. “Alright, thanks, Da, and thanks, Uncle Moony.”

Remus grinned. “Always glad to help.”

Harry watched as James and Remus left the room and then he was left alone in the library with his thoughts. He made himself comfortable in the chair and then he closed his eyes, calling forth all of his elementals into his mind. Then he began the slow process of bringing his memories forth to his mind.

Four hours later, he had managed to accomplish the categories with the help of his elementals. His brain was now split up into many levels of storage and filing. He had many categories that had sub-categories also. For example: School had the sub-categories of Potions, Herbology, Defence Against the Dark Arts, Ancient Runes, Care of Magical Creatures, Divination, History of Magic, Transfiguration and Charms. His other categories were the Dursleys, Childhood, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Neville and other friends, James, Sirius and Remus, Voldemort, Snape and Malfoy, the DA, Interests, Primary Education, and a Miscellaneous. Each category had sub-categories as well. He felt like his brain was suddenly so organized and that it was less jumbled up. He also found it a lot easier to bring anything forth that he was looking for.

He headed out into the living room and found James sitting in a chair with Remus curled up on the couch with Tonks. They were talking about the Order and about Arthur. He was apparently laying low for a while on doing Order business even if he was perfectly cured.

“Hi.”

“Wotcher, Harry,” Tonks replied with a grin.

James looked up and grinned. “Hey, how did it go?”

Harry nodded. “I think that it went really well. The advice that you gave me helped a lot and my brain is now in categories. Lots of different ones and some of them have sub-categories and everything.

It's pretty well organized now."

James grinned. "Excellent. Alright, why don't we head back to Grimmauld Place and talk about this a bit more before you go back to school?"

Harry nodded. "Sure, Da." He grinned when he saw Tonks snuggle closer into Remus' arms before she ran her hand over the rough stubble on his face. She kissed his cheek and then grinned up at Harry.

"See you later, Harry."

Harry gave her a cheeky grin. "Bye, Aunt Tonks."

Tonks laughed. "Aunt Tonks? Oh, I think I like that."

Harry grinned. "Uncle Moony and Aunt Tonks – I can handle that."

Tonks smiled. "Me too." Then she kissed Remus again.

Remus grinned as he watched his honorary nephew and best friend leave the room closing the door behind them before he slid his fingers into the short spikes of bubblegum pink. "I really like this pink."

Tonks smiled at him as she slipped comfortably into his lap. "You do?"

He nodded. "Yeah, I do. It's bright and spunky. And I think it's kind of sexy."

Tonks gave him a cheeky grin before she straddled him. "You do, do you?" She dragged her fingers recklessly through his mane of dark brown hair. "Like these grey hairs at your stress points make you look sexy?"

Remus snorted. "Please, they make me look old."

Tonks kissed his forehead. "Remus, you're not old. You are thirty-three years old of pure hunkiness. The grey hairs come from the

stress of your transformations, not your age. I bet all of the students had a crush on you when you were a professor.”

He rolled his eyes and worked on gently unbuttoning her blouse. “Nope.”

She grinned wickedly at him as he opened her shirt and began to slide his hands along her ribcage. “And just what do you think you’re doing, Mr. Lupin?”

He grinned and placed his lips against her throat. He pointed his wand at the door and muttered a locking charm and then a silencing charm. “Mmm, I was going to take terrible advantage of you.”

Tonks chewed her lip with a grin. “Mmm, then please continue, Professor.”

Remus grinned as he nibbled along her throat, laughing when she untucked his shirt and ripped the buttons open, yanking it up over his head. “Oh, I really plan to.” Then he yanked her mouth up to his and swallowed her moans with a kiss.

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Harry followed James back into the entrance hall so that they could floo back to Grimmauld Place. They arrived in the kitchen and found it empty so they headed into the living room to work.

“Aunt Tonks?” James asked. “Remus certainly blushed at those words.”

Harry grinned. “Well, I think that she’d make a great aunt. Besides, she’s going to convince him to get married.”

James grinned. “You think so?”

Harry nodded. “Oh yeah. They’re in love with each other and if Tonks could wear him down enough to date her she’s so going to wiggle him into marriage too. I think that she’s perfect for him.”

"I do too. And I really hope that she does finagle him into marriage. That would be very good for him." James replied. "Alright. So step two was the blocking thing. I don't know much about Occulmency so while you were working on step one I shared a floo call with Dumbledore and I asked him some questions. I also told him about your first lesson with Snape."

"What did Dumbledore say?" Harry asked, hoping that Dumbledore would then be teaching Harry and he wouldn't have to have lessons with Snape anymore.

"He mentioned that he would have a word with Snivelis about it and he banned me from the school for a while."

"Why?"

James shrugged. "Because he knows that I want to hex Snape, that's why. But banning me from the school is not going to keep Snivelis safe. He has to come to Order meetings eventually."

Harry grinned. "Nice Da. So what did Dumbledore say?"

"Dumbledore says that when it comes to blocking your mind you have to imagine something that you think is strong. He told me to tell you that when he first started he thought of building a brick wall. So that was his first block was that he sat down and worked on building that wall brick by brick. If you wanted concrete then you have to imagine pouring that concrete and making that wall strong. Only by mentally building the wall up step by step would you be able to block anything." James explained.

Harry nodded. "Okay, that makes sense. But where am I supposed to build this wall in my mind?"

"Well, apparently you're supposed to build it in front of your filing system. It should be at the very front of your mind because that is where the penetration always begins."

"Oh, okay, so I'm basically just building a wall in front of my mind."



“Exactly.”

Harry nodded. “Alright, so if I wanted to use my elementals for this. What would I do?”

James shrugged. “I have no idea about that. But I think that if you asked them to help build you a wall that it might be stronger because you’re using powerful ancient magic. Dumbledore told me to tell you that if you are going to use the elements to help you then you must have one wall built with each element and you must also build your own wall first because it would give you the ultimate protection. So if you decide to build a brick wall then you have to build one brick wall with your Earth elemental, one with your Fire, and so on. He also seems to think that it might take you a while. Because building the walls are no problem, but you have to maintain them.”

“How do I do that?”

“Work on keeping them in place. Every night before you go to bed file away any last minute details of the day and then close your wall. If you do this every night it will become a habit and the walls will stay strong. That’s it.” James explained. “Does that help?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I think it does.”

James grinned. “Excellent. So after you do that for a while I think that when Snape is working on penetrating into your mind you are eventually going to be able to keep him out.”

Harry sighed. “You mean I still have to have lessons with him?”

James laughed. “Yes, you still have to have lessons with him. Dumbledore thinks that it might be too dangerous for him to teach you because of the connection that you have with Voldemort. Snape is the only other person available. Besides, now that you know how to block your mind you might be a lot better at it.”

Harry nodded. “Okay, fine. But if he pisses me off, can I hex him?”

James laughed. “Oh, no matter how much I wish you could it pains

me deeply to say no because he is your professor.”

Harry sighed. “Alright, I’ll behave.”

James grinned. “Good. Okay, since we only have a bit of time left before you need to be back for dinner, why don’t you show me how far you’ve progressed in the animagus?”

“I almost had the full transformation of the wolf during the last lesson with McGonagall which was before Christmas.” Harry explained.

He concentrated on changing and quickly began to work on the full transformation it came on the first try but it took him over a minute to do the change.

James nodded. “I see, so you just have to work on changing the pace. Alright, do it again. Let’s see if we can speed that up.”

Harry worked on changing back and forth for half an hour and after thirty minutes he had it. In fifteen seconds he could go from wolf to human to phoenix to human to owl.

James grinned. “That’s incredible. So now the only thing that you need to work on is the lion. Tell Minerva that’s all you’ve got left. But I personally think that you don’t need lessons with her anymore. The ones you’re doing with your friends are probably good enough.”

Harry grinned. “Really?”

James nodded. “Yeah, I think so.”

“Excellent!”

“Speaking of the lessons with your friends, how are they doing so far with the transformations?” James asked.

Harry grinned. “Pretty good actually. Ron and Hermione haven’t managed anything yet but Ginny made a fox paw before Christmas. She was so excited. It only took her four months, Da.”

James grinned. "Wow, that's incredible. Tell her that I said congratulations."

"Sure. What about you? Have you managed any more of your transformations yet?"

James nodded. "Yeah, I've almost got the full raven now. I'm just working on the torso. I took your advice that flying in an animagus form is incredible. So once I manage the raven I'm going to try for the panther. And you need to work on your lion."

Harry grinned. "I will and I'll get it quickly hopefully."

James grinned. "I think that you might. Maybe not as quickly as the owl but probably pretty damn close to."

"Great. So where do you think that Uncle Sirius and Professor O'Bryan disappeared too?"

James smirked. "Knowing Padfoot, they're probably upstairs in the master bedroom."

Harry laughed. "Da!"

James shrugged. "What? I'm telling the truth."

Harry grinned. He couldn't wait to tell the twins that Sirius and Lexy were together. He knew that Sirius was going to be at Hogwarts a lot now and that Fred and George would have fun teasing him about it. "I can't wait to see how the twins react to Uncle Sirius and O'Bryan."

James laughed. "I think that they'll have fun picking on him. Now why don't you head back to school? It's almost dinner time. I'll see you next Sunday regular time, and Harry?"

"Yeah?"

"Start on that physical training this week. I probably won't test you for a few weeks but I want you to be ready."

Harry grinned. "Sure." He hugged James goodbye and then headed into the kitchen to floo out. James side apparated him to the tunnel under Honeydukes and then Disapparated to Potter Manor as Harry made his way back to school wondering how Sirius was getting along with Lexy.

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Sirius was getting along great with Lexy. They had indeed ended up in the master bedroom of Grimmauld Place and they were now lying like the dead in the big bed wrapped in each other's arms. Lexy's hair was tousled and spread out across his chest where she lay comfortably, her breathing heavy. Sirius had an arm draped loosely around her as he sighed in satisfaction. He had finally managed to catch her.

"You sound much too satisfied." She murmured as she placed a kiss in the center of his chest.

Sirius grinned. "Maybe because I am incredibly satisfied. I knew that it would only be a matter of time until I managed to get you here."

She slapped him playfully. "Prat! And for your information I don't have any idea how you got me here! I never sleep with men I just start dating."

Sirius grinned. "Well, Lex we've technically been dating for four months."

"We have not!"

He licked his lips and turned on his side so that he could look at her. "Oh? But it was four months ago when we shared our first kiss right there inside of Umbitch's office. And it was a yummy one at that."

Lexy grinned. "Sirius, a first kiss is only a first kiss when two people are involved."

Sirius grinned wickedly. "Oh, I think that you were involved. Do you know what I felt when I kissed you that day?"

“No, what?”

“That kiss, it was meant to be a friendly peck, a thank you for amusing the hell out of me for what you did to Umbitch but when my lips touched yours, explosions went off in my brain and my only coherent thought was where the hell had you been my entire life?”

Lexy smiled. She touched a hand to his cheek, running her finger over the rough stubble that he hadn't shaved off in two days. “Mine was, ‘wow’.”

Sirius blinked in surprise. “Huh?”

She nodded. “That day in Umbitch’s office when you kissed me, my only coherent thought was, ‘wow’.”

“Really?” He asked with a satisfied grin on his face.

She nodded. “Yeah, and then I was angry at myself for feeling it. You had no right to just kiss me like that. I knew nothing about you. I knew nothing more than your name. It bothered me. Not so much that you had kissed me, but the emotion that it inflicted in me so quickly. That kiss barely lasted thirty seconds and I couldn’t breathe over how much I loved it and over how much more I wanted you.”

Sirius grinned. “Well, that’s because you knew that I was amazing.”

She laughed. “No, what you are is incredibly conceited and arrogant. God knows why I like it.”

He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. “Because I’m sexy.”

She laughed as she licked her lips and then leaned over to kiss him softly. “I know that this is wrong. This entire thing is just ... I don’t know.”

Sirius placed a finger over her lips. “It’s not wrong, Lexy. It’s perfect. You’re beautiful and you’re smart and I’ve heard that you’re a really good teacher. You know everything there is to know about me as I

wrote letters telling you so. But you never wrote back and told me about you – other than the fact that you're incredibly stubborn."

"And you're persistent."

He grinned. "Aren't you glad?"

She sighed and then moaned as his finger slid from her lips down between her breasts to circle her bellybutton. She shivered in pleasure. "So glad."

He grinned and kissed her shoulder. "So, what's there to know about Alexis O'Bryan?"

She smiled. "What would you like to know?"

"Everything."

She smiled and kissed him softly. "Well, I'm twenty-six years old and currently employed at Hogwarts as an Ancient Runes professor. I'm an only child and my dad is muggleborn so we lived with tons of muggle stuff when I grew up. Da has a slight obsession with power tools. It's a little scary actually. Mum was a pureblood witch and her family disowned her for marrying my father. They were ashamed of her for marrying a muggleborn or mudblood as they called it. So I guess that makes me a half-blood."

"I can get the disowning thing. My parents practically disowned me for ending up in Gryffindor." Sirius replied.

Lexy nodded. "Well, we didn't care about my grandparents. It was just Da, mum, and I. I grew up in Ireland. I know Tonks briefly from Hogwarts but I was two years ahead of her so I didn't know her very well. Um ... I'm not sure what else to tell you. Oh, my name is Alexis Mary Brenna O'Bryan."

He grinned. "What do you like to do?"

"Read. Dance – I love to dance. I also like to listen to muggle soft rock music. I'm quite addicted actually. It's very embarrassing."

He laughed. "I'll take you out dancing one night."

She smiled. "Really? You are too sweet sometimes." She kissed his cheek. "What else do I like? I like ... roses and poetry ... tiny black puppies, singing locket, and tall, dark, and handsome men with tattoos of a black dog on their backs."

He grinned. "Like that do you?"

Lexy nodded as she ran her hand over the tattoo of the scruffy black dog that Sirius had tattooed on his right shoulder. "Yes I do." She slid her hands over his chest and through the little bit of black hair that surrounded his belly button. "And I like smooth skin and sexy little birthmarks shaped like crescent moons." She murmured as her tongue darted out to trace the birthmark on Sirius' hip.

He sucked in his breath as her tongue hit his skin. "Lexy," he moaned grabbing a fistful of her hair.

She grinned at him. "And I like it when you have your hands in my hair." His hands slid more comfortably into her hair and she smiled. "Is there anything else that you'd like to know?"

Sirius shook his head as he rolled on top of her, pinning his arms down on either side of her head. "Yeah, I want to know when the hell you're going to shut up and kiss me."

Lexy grinned wickedly at him as she slid her hands over his back. "I've never known you to ask."

He grinned. "Me neither." Then he crushed his lips down to hers.

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## **Chapter 42: Conversations and Snape**

**Author's Notes:** Please review

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## **Chapter XLII – Conversations and Snape**

Ginny stood under the shower head in her dorm room bathroom, letting the hot water beat against her skin. She had gotten involved in a snow ball fight with a bunch of her friends and even with the warming charm that she had used she had still been a bit cold so as soon as the fight had ended she had hurried up and into the luxury of a hot shower. She scrubbed her hair with the strawberry scented shampoo that she loved and knew drove Harry crazy, though that may have just been her scent in general, and turned at the sound of the door opening. She couldn't see who had come in because of the shadowed glass door that blocked both her and others from view. But she figured it was one of her room mates.

"Ginny, are you in here?" Demelza's voice called out.

"Yeah, Dee, I'm in the shower." Ginny replied in surprise. She had left Dee down in the common room arguing with Colin about something or another.

Demelza grinned. "Harry's back and he's looking for you."

"Thanks. I'll go and see him as soon as I'm done in here."

"Okay. He's talking to Colin now anyway." Demelza replied; her voice not as perky and easy going as usual.

Ginny nodded as she began to soap up with her flowery scented body wash. "Dee, are you alright? You sound kind of sad."

"I'm fine."

"Are you sure?" Ginny asked.

"Yes, really."

"Because honestly, you can tell me anything, you know. I know that there are some things that we just can't tell Colin. That one of the girls and one of the guys thing, can really only go so far."



Demelza laughed. "Very true. But really, Gin, I'm fine."

"Okay, if you say so."

Ginny rinsed off and then turned off the shower. She reached around the little bend for her towel and quickly dried off before she slipped into her green furry robe. She stepped out of the shower and looked at Demelza who was standing in front of the mirror playing with her hair. "Dee, really, what's going on?"

Demelza sighed. "Okay, but I think I'm going crazy."

Ginny began to use her wand to dry her hair as she looked at her friend. "Crazy?"

Demelza nodded as she bit her bottom lip nervously. "You can't laugh, okay?"

"Dee, what is going on?"

She sighed. "Okay ... I had this dream last night and ever since I had it I've been looking at ... well ... him, in a different way."

Ginny glanced at her friend quizzically now. "What did you dream and who did you dream about?"

Demelza grinned now, her eyes twinkling with mischief. "Well, I was on a beach working on my tan and just basking in the sun when this really dreamy guy comes over to me and he starts rubbing lotion on my body and I'm absolutely loving it. I mean, I really want him. He's drop dead gorgeous and he's funny and he's sweet. He's so sexy. He takes my breath away."

Ginny grinned. "Ooh, a naughty dream! Those are the best! So who was the lucky guy?"

Demelza laughed. "Colin."

Ginny's mouth dropped open. "No way! Colin was the dreamy, sexy

guy! Our Colin? The Colin who supposedly is talking to Harry, right now? That Colin!"

She nodded, biting her lip as this dreamy look came into her eyes. "Yes and he was gorgeous! And all day now I've been looking at Colin in an entirely new light. What is wrong with me, Ginny? Colin is one of my best friends! You are not supposed to think about your best friends like this. It is so wrong!"

Ginny giggled. "You and Colin."

"You said that you wouldn't laugh."

"I can't help it. It's just ... it's Colin." She took a deep breath. "Alright, I'm good now. Well, Colin is kind of cute and he's really sweet. It's okay to have a crush on him, Dee."

"But do I fancy him, Gin?" She asked, a look of concern coming over her face. "I mean, this dream came out of no where and ever since I've had it it's made me think about him but before I never thought about Colin that way."

Ginny shrugged. "I have no idea. I guess you'll have to figure that out on your own."

Demelza sighed. "That's what I was afraid of."

Ginny finished drying her hair and she used a brush to soften the curly waves before she tucked it back behind her ears. "There's nothing to be afraid of Dee. Just work out if it's only feelings that have projected themselves from your dream or real ones. If you give it a few days I think that you should be able to figure it out." She replied as she stepped behind the private changing screen and began to apply her flowery scented lotion to her body.

"I hope so. It's driving me crazy, this not knowing. I mean, how was I supposed to know that feelings could be so complicated. Besides, even if I did want Colin, I wouldn't stand a chance. His eyes have been permanently glued to Mandy Brocklehurst's breasts." She let out a huff of breath as Ginny laughed.

“Very true and a show of remarkably bad taste on Colin’s part, but he’ll get over it. I think most guys tend to fall in lust with big breasted blondes at one point in their lives. It’s natural.” She replied with a grin.

Demelza laughed. “I suppose. But it doesn’t make me feel any better.”

Ginny smiled warmly at her friend. “Dee, you are way prettier than Mandy. You’ve got pretty hazel eyes and hair so dark brown that it looks black. I think that you’re underestimating yourself. And don’t forget, you’re still a year younger than us in age and two years younger than us in school. Give Colin time if you decide that he’s what you want. He’s slow.”

Demelza smiled. “Thanks, Gin. You’re the best. Well, I’ve got some last minute homework to finish up so I’ll let you go so that you can beautify yourself for Harry.”

Ginny laughed. “Alright, I’ll talk to you later, Dee.”

“Bye.”

When Ginny was finished she changed out of her robe and into a baggy Pride of Portree jersey that she had stolen from Bill and a pair of black satin pyjama bottoms. She brushed her teeth and then she headed into the common room to find Harry. She didn’t see him when she came in so she headed over to Colin.

“Hey Colin, have you seen Harry?”

Colin nodded. “Yeah he just went up to his room.”

Ginny grinned. “Thanks.” She stole a quick glance back at her friend. His bright blue eyes were filled with excitement as he looked over the photographs in front of him and his bright blonde hair was tousled from his fingers. Colin, sexy? She giggled to herself, poor Dee.

She hurried up the boys’ staircase and knocked on his bedroom door. She heard him mutter a ‘come in’, so she stepped inside and she

almost swallowed her tongue. He was standing with his back to her in nothing but a pair of blue striped pyjama bottoms. His torso was bare as he was rummaging through his trunk for a shirt. She licked her lips and closed the door behind her, her heart pounding in her chest. She hadn't seen Harry without a shirt on since the summer when they had went swimming. He had definitely filled out a bit more.

"Well, I didn't expect to get such a nice show."

Harry turned to look at her and grinned. "Hey, that's what they pay me for."

She laughed. "I bet." She walked over to him and then she stopped in her tracks. His back was still facing her as he searched through his trunk and it was only now that she noticed that his smooth skin had tiny white scars in jagged lines in random places on his back. They seemed to disappear lower beneath his pants as well. She wondered why she had never noticed them all those times when they had gone swimming at Potter Manor. "Harry, what happened to your back?" She asked; her voice filled with concern.

He tensed and she could see him tense up immediately. His voice held the tone of embarrassed impatience when he spoke. "Nothing."

She slipped her arms around his waist and placed a kiss on the center of his back. "No really, what happened?" Her lips gently brushed against each scar and he shivered under her touch.

"Don't worry about it, Gin."

He pulled away from her and quickly pulled a white t-shirt over his head before sitting on his bed and leaning back against the headboard. Ginny climbed into bed with him, planting herself between his legs so that she could lean back against him, his arms wrapped around her waist.

"Why won't you tell me?"

"It's in the past and it's not important." He replied, his voice sharp.

“Well, it’s important to me. Who hurt you?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.” Harry replied. His body had tensed up again and she could feel him getting angry.

She nodded. “Fine.”

He nuzzled her neck, brushing her hair out of the way and inhaling the scent of flowers and strawberries that came from her body. She responded by pulling away from him a bit. He sighed. “Ginny, come on.”

“Come on, what?” She replied coldly. “Fine, I won’t mention it. So what happened today?”

He sighed, dragging his fingers through his hair in frustration. “Alright, I’ll tell you.”

She grinned and turned her head to kiss him softly. “I won’t think any less of you.”

He nodded. “Promise me that you won’t tell anyone else, ever?”

She nodded, looking and feeling more concerned by those words. “I promise.”

“Okay. Well, after Voldemort tried to kill me he, well ... you see, he hurt my mum, really bad. He tortured her so badly that she was paralyzed from the waist down and had no recollection of anything. She didn’t know about the muggle world or the magical world and she didn’t know who anyone was, including my Da.”

“Oh, Harry, I’m so sorry.” She replied as she kissed his cheek.

He nodded. “Well, Da was absolutely devastated. But after everything happened and Dumbledore arrived at my house they thought my parents were dead. Da had been knocked unconscious and his pulse was so low that they all thought that he was dead as they did my mum. So Dumbledore took me to live with my mum’s sister, a muggle, my Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon and my cousin Dudley Dursley.

When Da woke up and he realized where I was he wanted to bring me home to take care of me but Dumbledore convinced him that I would be safe with the muggles because he had to take care of my mum. Da and Uncle Remus took care of her together. She needed constant care, twenty-four hours a day. She was a danger to herself and to others. Da says she almost killed herself a few times with accidental magic and things like that.” He explained.

Ginny kissed his cheek. “That must have been terrible for James and Remus. They were probably heartbroken. Not to mention that you weren’t there either. That must have made it a lot harder on them. So you lived with muggles then?”

“Yeah, until I was five. Da sent money and gifts and letters but he never came to visit me because he couldn’t leave Mum. She was too much to handle and Da and Uncle Remus had to be with her all of the time. Most of the time they both had to be there as she was too much for just one of them to handle for more than a few minutes. Well, my aunt and my mum didn’t get along I guess. She wrote letters to my Da telling him that I was fine but she never showed me any of his letters. I never got any of the gifts that he sent me as they went to my cousin Dudley and I only got toys when Dudley didn’t want them anymore or because they were broken and I never knew that Da was alive. They told me that my parents had died in a car crash.”

Ginny gasped. “Why would they do that?”

Harry shrugged. “Who knows? So, I wasn’t allowed to ask any questions about my parents. I lived in a cupboard under the stairs and I cooked breakfast or some of it; I cleaned the house; I weeded the garden; and lots of other chores that five-year-olds wouldn’t normally do. I lived with them for four years. They told me that I was a freak and everything that went wrong was my fault. Well, Dudley was a bully and he made sure that any friends I made at school were beat up badly enough that they realized that it was dangerous to be my friend. Dudley hit me once with a baseball bat. I don’t remember exactly what I did but I remember Uncle Vernon taking the bat from Dudley and taking over the beating and then I remember him taking off his belt and the leather smacking my skin until I bled. Da healed as much of the scars as he could. But I’ll have these forever.”

“Oh Harry! Merlin, I’m so sorry!” She snuggled back against him, curling into his lap so that she could hold him closer to her as tears poured down her cheeks. “What horrible people! Did James kill them?”

Harry laughed. “No. He did punch Uncle Vernon though, but at that time he didn’t know about the beatings. When he came to bring me home it was right after Mum had ... and I had no idea who he was. But like I said, it’s in the past. I don’t want to think about it.” He wiped the tears from Ginny’s cheeks and he realized that he had never really had anyone cry for him before. He pulled her closer and sighed in contentment, glad that he had gotten that off his chest.

Ginny nodded. She ran her fingers over the smooth skin on his hands which were wrapped around her and gently traced the rough skin where Umbridge’s detentions had scarred him. He had suffered so much. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. It’s not your fault.”

“I know. Okay, let’s think of something better ... like how did your day go?”

Harry grinned. “Pretty well. Da and I went through some Occulmency books and I think that I might get a better grasp at it this week. I told him about Snape and Dumbledore says that he will talk to him. And even better news. Guess what?”

“What?”

“Sirius did it. He wore O’Bryan down and last I checked they were snogging each other senseless in the kitchen at Grimmauld Place.”

Ginny laughed. “No way! How did he do it?”

He grinned. “By sending her a gold and diamond locket that sings The Beach Boys ‘Wouldn’t it Be Nice?’ She came storming into the kitchen demanding to know what his problem was and why he would send her something so ridiculous and he just stands up and starts

singing the song to her. She shut him up with a kiss.”

Ginny laughed. “Oh, I bet that was good to see!”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, especially when Da and Uncle Remus started singing along in the background.”

“They didn’t!”

Harry laughed. “They did! I almost cracked a rib I was laughing so hard and then I joined in too.”

Ginny laughed. “You sang?”

Harry grinned. “Sure. I can sing, not good mind you, but I can sing.”

She giggled. “Wow.”

“I know. What about here? Did I miss anything interesting? Colin told me something about a giant snow ball fight.”

Ginny nodded. “Yeah that was fun. Too bad you weren’t here.”

“I wish I was.”

“I’ve got bad news too.”

Harry glanced down at her in surprise. “What kind of bad news?”

“Hagrid’s on probation by Umbitch.”

“What?”

“Yeah, so now it’s going to be a competition over who will be sacked first, Hagrid or Trelawney. Two guesses over who I’d choose.” Ginny replied.

Harry shook his head. “I hate her! She’s taking everything from me! Letters from home; Quidditch; and now she wants to take Hagrid – what is wrong with her?”



Ginny reached back to run her fingers through his hair and pull him down to nuzzle her neck. "She's Umbitch. And she can't take everything from you. You'll always have me."

He grinned as he kissed her softly. "Good. I love you."

She smiled. "You know, I don't think I'll ever get tired of hearing that."

Harry laughed. "I hope not."

She grinned. "I love you, too." She reached up to kiss him softly. "But it's late and time for me to go to bed before all of the boys come up."

"Do you have too?" Harry asked as he slid his hand up her jersey to dance his fingers along her stomach.

She nodded. "Yeah."

He boldly slid his hands a bit higher and his eyes darkened when he realized that she was absent a certain piece of clothing. Her head rolled back in pleasure as his hands roamed over her breasts beneath the jersey. Her skin was so soft and so smooth. He leaned down to capture her mouth with his. She moaned as soon as his lips touched hers, sliding her hands up his tee shirt so that she could touch skin. He deepened the kiss, sliding his hands around her back and out to slide through her hair. Ginny moaned and pulled away.

"Harry, I've got to go to bed now."

He tilted his forehead down to hers. "You're trying to torture me. Coming up here without a bra on. Now I'm going to be wondering how many other times I've been in a room with you when you were absent that piece of clothing."

Ginny gave him a wicked grin. "Oh, that's not the only piece of clothing I've been known to miss."

His eyes darkened and he reached for her to pull her close for another long kiss.

The dormitory door opened and Ron stepped in. "Oy, Potter – what are you doing in bed with my sister?"

Harry grinned as he cuddled Ginny closer to him. "Trying to convince her to stay a bit longer."

Ron eyed them suspiciously but since they were both fully dressed he seemed to be happier. "Well, no, out Gin, it's late."

Ginny rolled her eyes before she kissed Harry softly. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight."

Harry watched her go before he turned to Ron. "We were just talking. I told her that O'Bryan and Sirius are finally an item."

Ron grinned. "Stubborn old dog."

Harry laughed as he slid his bed curtains closed. "Yeah he is."

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Starting the next morning, Harry began his new physical training. He woke up two hours earlier than usual so that he could suit up and do his sit-ups and push-ups before he ran around the Black Lake. He then went into the Room of Requirement and imagined it as a workout room. He was supplied with some punching bags and some dummies to practice his fighting techniques on. He immediately set to work. When he was finished he had forty minutes left until breakfast was over so he showered and dressed for the day before he prepared himself for class.

Harry had also continued to work on his mind blocking with his elementals. They had been helping him out every night before he went to sleep but he knew that he wouldn't know if he had actually achieved anything until his next lesson with Snape. So when Wednesday came around he headed down into the dungeons and prayed that his hard work hadn't been for nothing. Snape looked up when he walked in.

“Close the door, Potter.”

Harry did as he was told and took a deep breath as the door clicked shut and then he turned around to face Snape.

“Well, have you been practicing?” Snape asked with his usual sneer.

Harry nodded. “Yes sir.”

“Hmm, well I guess we’ll see, won’t we?” He replied as he again took memories out and placed them in the pensieve on his desk.

“Interesting conversation I had a few days ago, Potter. Something about Dumbledore accusing me of not teaching you how to properly do Occulmency, or so he says you say.”

Harry nodded. “Well, it’s true. Da asked me how they were going and I told him that you didn’t tell me how to block my mind. You just invaded. I didn’t know that he was going to talk to Dumbledore about it.”

Snape sneered. “Well, let me tell you something, Potter. I am the teacher and you are the student. That makes me in charge and that makes me know what I’m doing. I am the one teaching you Occulmency so don’t accuse me of things that you don’t understand. I’m trying to help you not get killed by the Dark Lord. You think that you would show me a little respect.”

Harry glared at him. “The Dark Lord, eh? Why is it that you call him that? His name is Voldemort or Tom Riddle. I only heard Death Eaters call him the Dark Lord.”

“Do not speak his name!”

“Why? Dumbledore says his name. My father, my godfather, and my honorary uncle speak his name.”

Snape only continued to glare at him. “I said, do not speak his name!”

Harry shrugged, anger building up inside of him. He took a deep

calming breath to prevent himself from cursing Snape and instead focused on keeping the flimsy wall that he had managed to build with the help of his elementals up. He knew that it had to be stronger but for now it made him smile to think that he had something. "Fine."

Snape pointed his wand at Harry. "Legilimens!"

Harry could feel the slight prodding and pushing on his mind but his wall was staying up and the idea that he was keeping Snape out even if only for a moment pleased him. He kept eye contact with the greasy git as he worked on keeping that wall standing. He grinned when Snape fell back against the desk, breathing heavy.

"Well."

"Well what?"

"I see that you've obviously practiced. I never got past the wall."

Harry grinned. "I know. But I sure as hell didn't learn how to make that wall from you! I read some books on it and Dumbledore gave me some advice."

Snape sneered. "Yes well, again. Legilimens!"

This time, Harry's wall fell through. He could feel the invasion slide through the wall in his mind but this time he wasn't bombarded with memories. This time nothing came to the surface because his memories had been so meticulously filed away. This time, blue-white power flew from his fingertips, causing Snape to fly back against the wall. He gulped as he came out of the trance. Snape stood up, rubbing his head.

"You idiot! What did I tell you? You don't use your wand you use your mind! You're not learning anything at all!"

Harry shrugged. "I'm not an idiot. You're an asshole! And I'm sorry that I didn't succeed on my second lesson! I bet it took you a hell of a lot longer to learn that!"

Snape glared at him. "How dare you, Potter!"

Harry shrugged. "I dare."

"Fifty points from Gryffindor for your cheek."

Harry clutched his wand tightly in his hand. "See you next week, *sir*." He replied before slamming the door behind him and heading back up to the common room. He didn't care what the hell Snape did to him. He was done for the night and that was that.

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## Chapter 43: Valentine's Day

**Author's Notes:** not one of my best chapters - sry - please review!!

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### Chapter XLIII – Valentine's Day

Neither Harry nor Snape mentioned anything about their last lesson together. They actually took it into stride to pointedly forget it and to instead move on. Harry used his elementals to help build up the walls in his mind. The walls continued to be a bit flimsy but he managed to keep Snape out for long periods of time and when he finally managed to invade, Harry was able to push him out within a few minutes. Snape was thoroughly impressed with how far Harry had succeeded – not that he would mention it of course, but Harry knew it. He could tell by the looks that he got every once and while. Neither one of them mentioned the incident with the name calling or spoke to Dumbledore about the lessons; they simply continued on and ignored each other in every other sense possible. Harry was just glad that the git had smartened up.

Harry had also picked up his animagus lessons with McGonagall. She had been impressed with his skill at becoming the wolf and had been happy to help him with his last form – the lion. The lion came quickly, like the owl did, though it did take longer. Harry mastered the

lion transformation in two weeks and his lessons with McGonagall had ended. They had agreed to register the wolf as his animagus form and not tell anyone about his other three. McGonagall called a friend of hers from the Ministry to come to the school and test him. They were very impressed. Harry was now a registered animagus – at least in one form.

The animagus lessons with Ginny, Ron, and Hermione had also improved greatly. Ginny managed to change both of her hands into fox paws and by the beginning of February Ron could make a tiger paw and Hermione could make the hoof of a doe. They were all very pleased and excited to know that they had succeeded in something. Harry continued to encourage them and told them that they were doing well. Six months was how long it had took Sirius as well, which made Ron and Hermione feel better since Ginny had mastered the paw two months sooner and had progressed further than both of them.

As to Harry's Sunday lessons, they had indeed picked up a bit with Harry doing physical fitness on a regular basis. He continued to run every morning and do the sit-ups and push-ups and he worked on his fighting techniques whenever he could. James was pleased with his progress using the elementals as well and he had now progressed to keeping them out with him as guards for long periods of time. He could keep them out for a few hours before he started to get weak from the power. James had informed him that the more he practiced the longer the elementals could stay and that eventually they would be there all of the time and he wouldn't have to worry about it. This would only happen once his powers had managed to be more advanced and that because he was still learning he put more pressure on his magic which caused the weakness after a few hours. Once he had reached that peak, James was going to teach him how to use his elementals for protection of himself and others – something that James had constantly cursed himself for not using the night that Voldemort had come.

James had also managed to achieve both of his animagus transformations in the last few months. He could now become a stag, a raven, and a panther. He liked to use his panther form when he, Sirius, and Remus ran out during the full moon.

By the time that the notice went up declaring a Hogsmeade visit on Valentine's Day, Harry was depressed. He had wanted to surprise Ginny with a day of romantic fun but Angelina had called a Quidditch practice because the team was doing horribly! So Harry and Hermione decided to go together to talk to one Rita Skeeter. Hermione had come up with this plan of Harry telling the truth about what had happened with Voldemort to Rita Skeeter who would write an article about it otherwise Hermione would turn her over to the Ministry of Magic about her illegal animagus form of a beetle. Harry had not been thrilled by the idea but he decided to do it. He hoped that by coming out publicly with what happened it would make the Ministry smarten up. He and Hermione met her at the Three Broomsticks and there Harry gave her a detailed description of exactly what had happened the night that Voldemort returned, including names of known Death Eaters. The story was supposed to be published in *The Quibbler* by Luna's father. Once Harry had told her the story he felt better and he felt like a huge weight had been lifted off his chest.

Since Harry couldn't spend the day with Ginny due to her long practice, he planned to spend the evening. He had found a deserted old guest room in the castle on the fifth floor. He had set up a table and chairs in there and then he had covered the room in all of her favourite flowers. The room held a chesterfield with lots of plump pillows in the far corner as well. Harry thought that it was perfect because it gave them privacy. He lit candles around the room and then he asked the house elves to prepare a meal for the two of them. The house elves had been more than happy to oblige.

Harry had dressed himself in khaki slacks and an emerald green dress shirt and he paced nervously as he waited for Ginny. He had given her directions to the room. He grinned when a timid knock sounded on the door. He pulled it open and almost swallowed his tongue.

Ginny's hair was pinned up on top of her head in curls and waves. Her long brown skirt flowed around her and fluttered when she moved. She wore a white cashmere jumper that left her shoulders bare and she looked incredible. He grinned at her.

“You look beautiful.”

She smiled. “Thanks. So what’s this surprise that you have for me?”

He took her hand in his and pulled her into the room. “Come inside and see.” He closed the door behind them before locking the door.

Ginny gasped when she looked around the room. All of her favourite flowers were there and the little private table set for two with some candles in the middle. “Oh, Harry, this is so sweet.”

He grinned and kissed her hand. “I wanted to do something special since we couldn’t go into Hogsmeade today.”

She smiled at him. “This is special. Thank you.” She stood on her toes to kiss him softly. “So what’s on the menu for tonight?”

“Well, I think that they made us a special treat.”

“What kind of treat?” She asked.

Harry pulled out her chair for her and let her sit down before he took a seat across from her. “Do you remember how at the Yule Ball we had those menus? The house elves provided us with those. Take your pick.”

Ginny grinned as they both ordered their food and it arrived in front of them. “Harry, this is wonderful.”

He smiled at her. “So are you.”

She grinned. “Just listen to the flattery today. I appreciate it.”

“It’s not flattery when I’m telling the truth, Gin.” She blushed and he grinned. “So, I think I’m afraid to ask, but how was the Quidditch practice today?”

Ginny groaned. “Terrible! Horrible! Hopeless.”

“It wasn’t that bad, was it?”



"It was. Gryffindor is doomed, Harry! We suck so bad it's not even funny! At the end of the practice, Angelina actually burst into tears!"

"No way, was it really that bad?"

"Oh, it really was." Ginny insisted. "Jack Sloper had to go to the hospital wing because he knocked himself out with his own bat!"

Harry grimaced. "Merlin, did he really?"

She nodded. "Yeah and Andrew Kirke fell off his broom. Mind you, he wasn't very high off the ground so he wasn't hurt but it was the principle of the thing. Ron's keeping skills are going down the drain! He's got next to no confidence left! It was dreadful!"

Harry sighed. "Umbitch really got her way with this one."

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, she did. What about you? How was your day in Hogsmeade with Hermione?"

Harry shrugged. "It was alright. Hermione had a bit of a surprise for me."

"What kind of surprise?"

"Rita Skeeter."

"Rita Skeeter! Why would Hermione allow that cow to even be in her sight?" Ginny demanded.

Harry laughed. "Actually it was a smart idea though I disagreed at first, but I gave Rita an interview."

Ginny glanced up at him quizzically. "An interview?"

He nodded. "Yeah, about what happened in June. I told her exactly what happened from the time that Cedric and I touched the cup and who the Death Eaters were and everything. Rita agreed to write it on the count of Hermione threatening her that if it wasn't written exactly

like I said then she would report her beetle transformation.”

Ginny grinned. “Well, this is great then! The ministry will finally get a clue and maybe knock some sense into everyone!”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know about that. I’d like that to happen but I’m not so sure. First of all, the *Daily Prophet* won’t print this article and Hermione knew that so the article is going to appear in *The Quibbler*. Luna talked her dad into it. Second, is that *The Quibbler* magazine is kind of a joke so I don’t know how well people are going to take the article. They might not take it seriously at all.”

“I think that you’re wrong about that. The ministry has been avoiding the truth for a while now Harry. The wizarding world isn’t stupid. Death Eaters have broken out of Azkaban and the ministry isn’t telling the world anything. I think that this article will inform a lot of people about what happened and make them think. They’ll either believe you or they won’t believe you. There’s nothing else that you can do about it.” Ginny explained.

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I suppose your right.”

Ginny grinned wickedly. “I can’t wait to see Umbitch’s face when she sees this article!”

He laughed. “I think I’ll be in detention for the rest of the year.”

She grinned. “Yeah, but it won’t be a bad detention or your da and Sirius will go in and threaten her again and I think that that’s the last thing anyone wants there.”

He nodded. “True.” He reached across the table to take her hand in his. “Have I told you how beautiful you look tonight?”

She blushed. “I love you, Harry. Happy Valentine’s Day.”

He smiled at her as he brought her hand up to his lips. “I love you, too. I have a present for you.”

“You didn’t have to get me anything. This evening was enough.”

"I wanted to." He reached behind him and withdrew an average sized box and handed it over to her. "Happy Valentine's Day, Ginny."

She opened the box carefully and looked inside. She gasped when she saw it. It was sterling silver charm bracelet. She pulled it out and looked up at him. "Oh, Harry, it's beautiful!"

He grinned. "I'm glad that you like it. I picked out a few charms that I thought were important pieces of your life."

Ginny continued to open the little boxes that held each individual charm and that had been wrapped carefully in the bigger box. He had bought her five charms to start: a number six which signified her six brothers; a charm of three people which signified her friends; a book which signified the diary; a broom which signified her love of flying; and a lightning bolt through a heart which signified Harry and his love for her or vice versa.

"Harry, it's beautiful. Thank you so much!"

He smiled as he helped her clip all the charms onto the bracelet before he tied it on her wrist. "You're welcome."

She stood up and pulled him to his feet so that she could throw her arms up around his neck and kiss him. Her lips met his and he sighed in contentment as he kissed her back. She pulled away and smiled at him.

"Now it's time for your gift."

He grinned. "Oh yeah, what did you get me?"

She smiled and pulled out a small box to hand to him. "Tell me if you don't like it."

He glanced at her quizzically. "Why wouldn't I like it?"

She shrugged as he opened the box and found a thin sterling silver chain with a small silver Celtic cross hanging from it.

"It's a Celtic cross. It has a charm on it and brings protection to whoever wears it. The longer you wear it the stronger the protection." Ginny explained nervously.

Harry grinned at her. "Thanks, Gin, I love it."

"Really?" She asked as she continued to twist her hands together.

He nodded. "Really. It's really thoughtful. I'll wear it all of the time. I'll never take it off."

She breathed a sigh of relief. "I wasn't sure what you'd think of it but I really want you to be better protected."

He smiled. "Thank you." He clasped the chain on and then pulled her close and leaned down to capture her lips in his.

She smiled against his mouth as she kissed him back. "I love you, Harry."

He grinned as he leaned his forehead down against hers to look into those chocolate orbs. "I love you, too." Then his lips fell against hers again.

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"I love the necklace, Remus." Tonks murmured as she lay cuddled in the bed next to him that evening after their incredible love making. She fingered the rainbow pearls that she wore around her neck; grinning wickedly at the idea that she wasn't wearing anything but the pearls.

"I'm glad. I thought that the rainbow ones suited you."

She grinned. "They do. They're perfect." She snuggled closer, running her hand through his thick brown hair and then up and down his chest. "Remus?"

"Hmm?" He asked, his eyes slightly closed and a half-smile on his

lips as her hands continued to roam over his chest.

"I love you."

He grinned. "I love you, too."

She smiled. "So, since we love each other so much and since we're so happy even though we haven't been together that long ... I think that we should get married."

"What?" Remus asked, sitting up.

Tonks simply pushed him back down and began to plant small kisses along his throat and shoulders. "Don't you want to get married?"

"Married?" Remus asked. "I – I don't know."

"You know you want to," she murmured as her lips continued to trail along his skin. "Let's get married Easter weekend so Harry and his friends can come back for the wedding. I want to be Mrs. Nymphadora Tonks Lupin, but I will be Tonks Lupin if you want to live."

"Easter weekend?"

"Hmm-hmm, of course, I'll need an engagement ring and we'll have to invite everyone. And I suppose that we need to find a place to get married at since Easter is less than two months away. Well, what do you say?"

He grinned at her when she looked up at him. "You've put quite a lot of thought into this, haven't you? I haven't even said yes or no yet."

She grinned and kissed the center of his chest. "Well, I figured that I could talk you into it."

He laughed. "Give me time to find the perfect ring."

Tonks grinned broadly and snuggled closer. "See? I knew that I could do it!"

“Brat!” Remus murmured as he kissed her softly. She moaned as his lips brushed over hers and then he pulled away. “Tonks ... I don’t have a job and I don’t have any way of supporting you. I can’t hold a job because I’m a werewolf.”

“I make more than enough money for both of us as an Auror.”

“Well, yes, but I want to do something. I don’t want to sponge off of you my entire life. Do you have any idea how lucky I’ve been that James has allowed me to live here with him all of these years? I’ve managed to save quite a bit of money, not to mention what I inherited from my parents because I’ve lived here. I mean, I’m not rich, but by all means I’m well off. But I have nothing else. Where are we going to live? Where am I going to work? No one wants to hire a werewolf.” Remus replied.

Tonks smiled as she kissed his cheek. “We’ll be fine, Remus. We don’t need lots of money. And we’ll still be fine when we have children to support.”

“Children?” Remus asked paling.

Tonks nodded. “Uh-huh. Don’t you want any children?”

“Well, I ... I’ve never really thought about it to be honest. But yeah, I think I would. What if I hurt them?”

Tonks smiled. “You won’t. I’ll make sure that you’re properly locked up when the time comes. You would be a great daddy.”

He grinned. “Yeah, I suppose I would. We’re getting married.”

She laughed. “Yeah, and it’s the best Valentine’s Day present ever!”

He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively as he kissed her. “I can think of something better.”

“Hmm, Professor Lupin, just what did you have in mind?”

Remus slid his hands down her body. "Why don't I show you?"

She grinned. "Yes, why don't you?"

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Lexy stretched lazily in her bed and glanced over at Sirius who was snoring loudly from where he sprawled next to her. She sighed and cuddled closer as she looked down at the bracelet that he had gotten her. It was gold and covered in tiny hearts to match the locket. It matched the locket in another way as well, as in it sang. If you touched two hearts at the same time with your fingers, holding it down for a few seconds it would burst into a few verses of "Wouldn't it be Nice?" in Sirius' voice. The guy was a complete whack and she was terribly afraid that she was falling in love with him.

How would he react if he knew how she was feeling? She figured he'd run for the hills. He was so handsome and he was smart and fun and sweet and so incredible in bed, but he just wasn't the commitment type. He was a player and she knew it. She had heard so many stories of all of the girls that he had dated and she was so afraid that she was just another one of the bunch. She knew that it was different between them a little bit, but it was just over all ... he wasn't the commitment type. She knew it but she continued to hold onto the hope that something bigger might happen between them. They spent a lot of time together now. Sirius spent almost every night with her and every morning he would try to persuade her to stay in bed all day, even if she had a class to teach. She didn't get flowers every day and night now, but every once in a while he would hand her a single rose or something, something that would just make her heart melt. It meant more to her because it was impulse when he did it and she loved him for it.

She leaned over him and gently brushed one of his black locks away from his face and sighed. She was definitely in trouble. She kissed his lips softly, squealing in delight when he rolled over and pinned her beneath him.

"Sirius!"

“Lexy!”

“I thought that you were sleeping.” She murmured.

He began to plant tiny kisses along her throat. “I was only pretending. Let me make love to you.”

“Again?” She asked, a half-smile on her face. She would do anything for this man and she knew it without a doubt.

“All night, sweetheart, all night.” His lips fell upon her neck and she arched her head back with a smile. Yeah, she was in love with him. But what was she going to do about it?

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The weeks continued to drag on. The first Quidditch match, Gryffindor against Hufflepuff was a disaster! But thanks to Ginny, they only lost by ten points because of a lucky catch of the snitch. All of Gryffindor was incredibly depressed about the horrible game.

As to the interview that Harry gave in *The Quibbler*, it had more of an effect than he planned on. The day that the magazine was sent out, Harry received a copy in the mail along with tons of letters telling him whether or not people believed him. Umbridge immediately demanded of him why he was getting so much mail. Harry simply grinned and told her that he had given an interview about what had happened in June and showed her the magazine. She was so angry that she made a decree telling everyone that *The Quibbler* was prohibited. This turned out to not be a smart move as the entire school was now reading the article. People had charmed notes and textbooks to hide the article from Umbridge and they were even sprouting out quotes from it. Harry was no longer thought to be a raving lunatic. *The Quibbler* sold so many copies that Luna’s father actually had to reprint. Professor Trelawney was so happy about the article that she told Harry that she had been wrong, he wasn’t going to die young but instead would get married young, become Minister of Magic and have twelve children.

Harry continued to dream about the corridor and the black door. The



door was always on the verge of opening when he woke up and he found himself getting more and more frustrated by the dream. James, Sirius, and Remus didn't know what to tell him any more. Harry had also had another dream where he could see through the eyes of Voldemort. A man named Rookwood was asking Voldemort for forgiveness as Voldemort apparently had been badly advised. A man named Avery had told Voldemort that Bode would be able to remove it. But Rookwood said that Bode could not have removed it and that he would have known this which is why he fought so hard against Malfoy's Imperius Curse. Voldemort then had Avery sent in and Avery was then punished by the Cruciatus Curse and Harry woke up just as he noticed Voldemort's reflection in the mirror. Harry wasn't sure what to say about these dreams as he was succeeding and practicing well in his Occulmency. The Marauders didn't know what to tell him either.

Harry's lessons with Snape began to take on a new form when Snape happened to break through the memory of Harry's dream of Avery and Rookwood. He looked almost scared and furious at the same time. Snape had then accused Harry of not trying hard enough to block Voldemort from his mind. In his anger, Harry's walls crumbled once more and he knew that he needed to work on making them stronger and keeping them in tact.

Professor Trelawney had also finally been sacked by Umbridge. Umbridge basically thought that she was an old fraud – most people tended to agree – but since everyone hated Umbridge more, the entire school couldn't believe what she was doing. She wanted Trelawney out of the castle completely. Dumbledore stepped in and told Umbridge that Trelawney maybe can't teach but she could still live at Hogwarts. He had then brought in Firenze, the centaur that had saved Harry's life in his first year. Firenze was to be the new Divination teacher. Umbridge was not impressed as she seemed to have a serious dislike for anyone who wasn't a pureblood.

Firenze's class turned out to be an interesting class and at the end he asked Harry to tell Hagrid that his attempt wasn't working and that he should abandon it. Harry was then left wondering just what Hagrid was still hiding from them. Hagrid's injuries had never really healed over and Harry wondered if his injuries had something to do with what Firenze had mentioned.

The DA meetings were still going really well and Harry had moved on to teach them how to do patronuses. Most of the students had learned really quickly but their meeting was interrupted by a house elf named Liddy who was a friend of Dobby's. She warned them that Umbridge was coming. Apparently, Cho's friend Marietta Edgecombe had told Umbridge of their secret. Harry had then found himself in Dumbledore's office with the Minister of Magic and a few Aurors, including Kingsley. It had all been a big mess and Dumbledore had disappeared in the chaos, taking the blame upon himself for the club. Harry's guilt factor had kicked in big time.

To make matters worse, with Dumbledore's absence, a new notice had gone up declaring Umbridge as the new Headmistress of Hogwarts. To everyone's amusement, the head office sealed itself and she couldn't get in so she was forced to use her own. She also gave certain students special privileges, students that she had used to help round up the DA – she called them the Inquisitorial Squad and it included Draco Malfoy, Pansy Parkinson, Crabbe, and Goyle as well as a few sixth and seventh year Slytherins whose names Harry didn't know. They had the right to take house points and were constantly taking from all three houses. Fred and George decided to make matters more hectic for Umbridge and locked Montague, the Slytherin Quidditch captain, in the Vanishing Cabinet. No one could find him for weeks until he turned up in a toilet. All in all, the school year had taken a turn for amusement.

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## **Chapter 44: Easter Break**

**Author's Notes:** OKAY I EDITED AND ADDED A STEAMY H/G FLUFF SCENE SO please review

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## **Chapter XLIV – Easter Break**

Harry was on his way to his latest lesson with Snape when he felt his

mirror heat up in his pocket. He slid into a deserted corridor and slipped it out, grinning when he recognized Remus' face in the mirror.

"Hey!"

Remus smiled at him. "Hi, Harry. Listen, I know that you're on your way to another Snape lesson but I have some news to tell you."

"What kind of news?"

"Great news! Well, the news actually came on Valentine's Day but we kept it a bit of a secret. James and Sirius were thoroughly shocked when I told them this morning."

"Uncle Remus, you're keeping me in suspense? What news?" Harry asked with a grin. He had never seen his uncle look so good. His eyes were alight with pure happiness and he looked good, not so worse for wear like he was good at getting because of his condition. He looked happy.

"Well, you, Ginny, Ron, Hermione, Fred, and George are coming to Potter Manor for Easter break. I know that you have exams and things to study for but I can't convince her to wait and frankly, I don't want to wait. We actually waited so long to tell anyone because I had to find her the perfect ring but I think it turned out good." He replied, grinning. "Tonks and I are getting married on Sunday."

Harry grinned. "Wow! That's great! You've cooked this up since Valentine's Day!"

Remus nodded. "Sort of yeah. I mean, she asked me in a non-conventional sort of way and then I had to get a ring and all the jazz. It's going to be great! I'm getting married."

Harry grinned. "Congrats, Uncle Moony! I think that you and Aunt Tonks will be perfect for each other!"

"Aunt Tonks? She really gets a kick out of that you know." Remus replied.

Harry laughed. "Well, I'll just have to make sure that I use it then won't I? But hey, I'm going to be late as it is so I guess I'll see you on the weekend?"

Remus nodded. "Yeah, you'll be coming here Friday after dinner in a portkey in Minerva's office. See you then and share the news will you?"

Harry grinned. "I will and everyone will be just as pleased as I am. See you later."

When Remus' face disappeared from the mirror he stuck it back in his pocket before he continued on his way to Snape's office. His Occulmency lessons had really picked up well and he could now keep Snape out for long periods of time but his problem was once Snape managed to invade. He had to work on pushing him out with his mind alone and to try not to resort to magic. He stepped inside the office, closing the door behind him.

"You're late, Potter!" Snape snapped as he placed some memories into the pensive on the desk.

Harry shrugged. "I got held up, deal with it."

Snape sneered. "You know one day you're going to pay for that cheek of yours!"

Harry shrugged. "Let's just do this."

Snape nodded and pointed his wand at Harry just as Draco came rushing in. "Draco, learn to knock!" Snape demanded.

Draco nodded. "Sorry, sir, but Montague, he's not doing so well. Ever since he turned up in that toilet he's been a little out of it and now Madam Pomfrey wants to talk to you, as does Montague. He's really sick, sir."

Snape nodded. "Fine. Potter, we will continue your remedial potions at a later date. Come, Draco."

Harry watched as the two of them left the office. He felt like he should be relieved to have the evening free but he really didn't. He had been looking forward to a good fighting match between himself and Snape. He sighed as he picked up his bag and was about to leave when he caught the reflection of the pensive in the glass cabinet. He turned to look down at it and wondered not for the first time just what kind of memories Snape was hiding from him. He dropped his bag down on the ground and gently stirred the silvery liquid with his wand and then he plunged in headfirst without a thought to the consequences.

He landed in what looked like the Great Hall. Students were lined up in desks furiously writing. He noticed a greasy haired kid with his nose practically touching the parchment and he realized that it was obviously a fifteen-year-old Snape. The students were obviously writing their O.W.L.s. Then he grinned when he recognized the fifteen-year-old boy sitting a few seats back as his Da. His messy black hair was still sticking up in every which direction and his glasses were sliding down his nose as he scribbled a heart with the letters L.E. in it on the parchment as well as a few drawings of some snitches. He grinned at the idea of his father already being in love with his mum.

Harry recognized Sirius a few seats back. He had obviously already finished his test as well as he was leaning back in his chair, his hair falling in his face in a casual manner. A few girls who were sitting a few seats back were staring at him with obvious interest but he was ignoring them. Remus and Pettigrew were sitting nearby as well. Flitwick collected the tests and Harry watched as the four Marauders headed outside onto the grounds. Snape was following behind them but he was staring intently at some paper in front of him. They were briefly discussing some of the exam questions – namely the ones that listed signs of a werewolf. The Marauders took a seat under a large oak tree near the lake. James was playing with a snitch that he had nicked, letting it fly only so far away from him before he grabbed it back. Pettigrew was watching in fascination and kept making these gasping noises that bugged Harry and he wondered how his father could stand it.

*“Stop it, James, before Wormtail wets himself,” Sirius replied with lopsided grin.*

James shrugged and put the snitch in his pocket as if he had only been waiting for someone to mention it. He kept running his fingers through his hair and making it stand up higher and giving hopeful glances at the girls over by the lake. Harry recognized one of the girls as his mum. He wondered why his father kept doing that to his hair; he guessed that James must have thought that he looked better or something. Windswept almost, like he had just come off a broom.

*"I'm bored." Sirius replied.*

*This seemed to be what James had been waiting for. "Me too. We need to do something fun. Ooh look, Snivelis." He stood up and looked over at Snape who was sitting over by another tree still looking over his notes and minding his own business. "Hey Snivelis! That examiner isn't even going to be able to read your test; it'll have big grease marks all over the page."*

*Snape stood up, frowning as he pointed his wand at James. "Git."*

The next part of the memory Harry watched as if it was a bad film.

James used a Disarming Charm on him immediately and then he froze him in his spot. Snape began to mutter about what an arrogant jerk James was. Harry watched as Lily came running over, berating James for being such an arse and picking on Snape. Snape then called her a mudblood so James used a Cleaning Charm on Snape's mouth. Lily began to yell at James, demanding that he leave Snape alone. Snape recovered and used a jinx on James so James charmed Snape so that he was hanging upside down. James then demanded that Snape apologize to Lily, but Lily told him that she didn't want an apology and demanded that James put Snape down. James did as she asked but then Snape called Lily a mudblood again so James placed him upside down once more. Snape tried to jinx James again so Sirius used another Freezing Charm on him. James was just asking the growing crowd if they wanted to see Snape's underwear when Harry suddenly felt himself being pulled out of the memory.

Harry fell to the floor of Snape's office and gulped as he looked up at

the fully grown man Snape. His eyes were bulging and his face was flushed with anger.

“Think that was funny, Potter? Did you find it amusing?” He spat.

Harry shook his head no as he stood to his feet. “No, sir, I – I didn’t mean to –”

“Oh, you didn’t mean to? Well, Potter, forgive me if I don’t believe you. You are nothing but an arrogant and conceited prat just like your father is! Now get the hell out of my office and don’t ever come back! Occulmency lessons are now officially OVER!”

Harry could only nod as he ran from the office. He wasn’t sure why he was running but he didn’t stop until he found himself in the boys’ dormitory. Most of the students were in bed. He changed into his pyjamas and then he climbed into bed but he didn’t sleep. His thoughts turned to all of the stories that the Marauders had told him. Had they all been a lie? The Marauders had been bullies and nothing else. In all of the stories that he had heard the outcome had never been like what he had seen in that memory. Snape had been right. His father was arrogant and he had been conceited. He had always been proud to be compared to his father but now he wasn’t so sure. He rolled over onto his side and sighed; he felt like his world had been pulled into question. He closed his eyes and prayed for sleep.

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Harry was quiet the next few days. He didn’t say much to anyone and Ginny, Ron, and Hermione were all worried about him. He told them about Remus and Tonks getting married but he didn’t mention what he had seen in the pensive. He had to talk to his da and to Sirius and Remus; he had to know the truth.

Friday evening they used a portkey to bring them to Potter Manor. The four of them arrived in the entrance hall and James grinned at them as they got to their feet.

“Hey everyone! Welcome back!”

Harry nodded but he didn't look at his father. The memory of what he had seen in the pensieve was still so close to the surface. "Where is everyone?"

"Well, Tonks is still at the ministry but she should be back soon. Remus is upstairs with Sirius and Molly and Arthur haven't arrived yet." James explained.

"Alright," Harry took Ginny's hand in his and holding his bag on his shoulder he headed upstairs without another word.

Once they were on the landing of the second floor, Ginny turned to Harry. "Are you ever going to tell someone what's bothering you?"

He sighed. "I can't keep anything from you, can I?"

She smiled at him as she followed him into his bedroom. "No, you can't. Now come on, you've been in a bad mood since your last Occulmency lesson with Snape. Did something happen?"

"Gin, look, I understand that you're worried about me, but I don't want to talk about it right now, okay?"

"No, it's not okay. Harry, I love you, but you have one main flaw that I am determined to change. You hold everything in and you don't let anyone in when you have a problem or a concern. You can't do that. It's unhealthy and it's better for everyone if you would just tell others what's going on." Ginny explained.

He nodded. "I know, but I need to talk to the Marauders about this, not you."

"Alright, then, why don't you?"

He was quiet for a few minutes before he pulled her down to sit on the edge of his bed. "Ginny, okay ... I just ... I looked into some of Snape's memories on Wednesday and well ... I feel like everything that I know about my father is a complete lie."

"Why? What was the memory of?" Ginny asked. "James is a



wonderful person and you know that. He's your da."

"Why thank you, Ginny; it's nice to know that you think so kindly of me. What's up, Harry? You gave me an odd look as soon as you came in." James replied from the doorway as he casually leaned against the doorjamb staring at his son with raised eyebrows.

Harry sighed as Ginny leaned over to kiss his cheek. "Can I have the same room as before?"

James smiled at her. "Of course. Go make yourself at home."

She nodded as she left the room, swinging her knapsack onto her shoulder. As soon as she left, James closed the door behind her and turned to Harry. "Well, what's going on? You obviously have something to say to me."

Harry nodded. "On Wednesday, something happened and Snape had to leave the lesson, Occulmency lesson that is, and, well, he's been placing memories in Dumbledore's pensieve and I couldn't help but wonder what memories he didn't want me to see. So I sort of ... viewed them."

"This can't be good."

"No. Da, the memory was of the afternoon after your DADA O.W.L. and you were horrible! A bully even! In all of the stories that you've ever told me about Snape, they were never like that!" Harry replied.

James sighed as he took a seat on the bed next to his son. "I wasn't a bully. Snape just ... he pissed me off, it didn't take much. One remark here and there and I wanted to curse the git. I couldn't help myself."

"I don't care, Da. This time it was your fault. Snape was just reading over his notes minding his own business and then just because Uncle Sirius said that he was bored you started cursing and jinxing Snape. He wasn't even doing anything to you!" Harry protested.

"Oh, that ... yeah, I guess I was kind of arrogant and a bit conceited

when I was fifteen. Snape was easy to pick on and he was fun to pick on. But just because he didn't deserve it that time doesn't mean anything, Harry. He was rude, insulting and most of the time he did deserve something. He was always reading books heavy on the dark arts and muttering things under his breath. I remember that afternoon. I turned him upside down and Lily came marching over, demanding that I leave him alone. I was so in love with her, so stupid crazy in love. I think that I did most of the stupid things that I did just for her attention." James replied. "I was a prat, but I was fifteen. I changed, Harry."

Harry nodded. "But everything ... since my first day at Hogwarts Snape has been telling me that I'm arrogant and that I'm conceited just like you and I never believed him. But after that memory ... Da, I was ... I was ashamed."

James slipped his arm around Harry's shoulders. "I'm sorry, Harry. I know that I was jerk when I was in school. I was immature and it was the whole age thing and more than that I suppose. Maybe I was a bully. But Snape was a greasy haired git and he ..."

"He what?"

The bedroom door opened and Sirius and Remus stepped in. "Hey, Harry, we were wondering where you had disappeared to. What are you talking about?"

James smiled. "Hey, Harry saw Snape's memory of a time when I was picking on him only because Padfoot said he was bored. He's not impressed."

Remus sighed. "Harry, don't judge us on one memory. We were young and we were immature and James and Sirius were prats. But I was a bigger prat because I never encouraged them, but I never exactly tried to stop them either."

Sirius nodded. "And don't forget that it was Snape's memory. A person's memory can be altered a bit by their own thoughts but most of it was probably true."

“Da kept running his fingers through his hair, making it stand up everywhere and then he’d look over at the lake towards Mum.”

Sirius laughed. “I forgot that he used to do that. He thought it made him look cool.”

“I did look cool!” James protested.

Remus grinned. “It’s what you thought that counts. Harry, we were kids, everyone does stupid things when their kids and that was one of ours.”

Sirius nodded. “By September of the next year, James really smartened up and I did too. We didn’t pick on Snivelis so much and we became more mature and less irresponsible. I know I regret some of the things that I did in school and I know that Prongs and Moony feel the same way.”

Harry nodded. “I’m sorry that I didn’t ... it’s just that when I saw that memory ...”

James grinned. “Don’t worry, Harry, I understand. I’m sorry that you even had to question my actions. I should have told you that I was a bit of bully in the sense of Snape anyway when I was in school. I guess I forgot about it. I’ll apologize to the git if it makes you feel better.”

Harry snorted. “And watch the two of you kill each other? I think not.”

James laughed. “Good point.”

Remus nodded. “Yeah, okay but here’s a question. How did Snape react when he realized that you had viewed his memories?”

Harry gulped. “Well, he basically told me to get the hell out of his office and never come back and I think there was something in there about never teaching me Occulmency again.”

“HE WHAT?” Sirius exclaimed.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, but I think I really got it down-pat now. I mean I can keep Snape out of my mind for long periods of time and when he does get in, it only takes me a little while to push him back out."

James shook his head. "I don't care how damn well you're learning, Harry! The fact of the matter is that you're still learning and that you need a proper teacher! Since Dumbledore and Snape are the only people qualified that doesn't leave much room especially since Dumbledore is in hiding. You need to talk to Snape and demand that he continue your lessons again."

"But ... but ..."

"No buts. If you don't go tell him yourself I'll go and I can tell you right now that that particular meeting will not end in kindness. Do you understand?" James asked.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I got it."

"Good. Now come on, let's head downstairs. We need to discuss some last minute preparations for the wedding. You're standing in the wedding, you know?"

"What?"

Remus nodded. "James is my best man, but I need you and Sirius as some groomsmen."

Harry grinned. "Sounds interesting. What exactly does a groomsmen do?"

Sirius grinned. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

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Harry made his way back upstairs later on that evening after enjoying a fun-filled dinner with the Weasleys, Lexy, Tonks, Hermione, and the Marauders. He was tired and he was still wondering how he was going to talk to Snape when he returned to school on Monday. After Harry had spoken to the Marauders he felt a lot better. He still

thought that they had been a little rash in school and a tad bit irresponsible and immature but he accepted the fact that they made mistakes and he felt better for it. But he was definitely dreading going to talk to Snape when school was back in session. He turned at the sound of a door opening and smiled at Ginny.

“Hey.”

She grinned as she scratched Foolish behind the ears. He was sitting next to her with a sloppy grin on his face. “Hey, you look better.”

He smirked. “I feel better. As usual, you were right.”

“I’m always right, Mr. Potter, and you would do good to remember that.” Ginny replied.

Harry grinned as he took a step towards her, sliding his arms around her waist. “I’ll remember.”

She smiled up at him. “And just what do you think your doing?”

He placed a butterfly kiss on the tip of her nose. “I was going to enjoy myself.” In one quick move he had scooped her up into his arms and kicked her bedroom door shut behind them. He carried her over to the armchair in the corner, taking a seat and cuddling her close in his lap. “What do you think of that?”

She grinned and slid her hands into his hair. “I think that I can live with that.”

“Good because I wasn’t sure if I could walk away without a taste.”

Ginny blushed as he leaned down to gently capture her lips with his. The heat hit her as she slipped her fingers into his hair. His mouth made her purr in pleasure as it moved over her lips softly in quick greedy bites. Just like every time he kissed her, she melted beneath him and just basked in the pleasure that was Harry.

He nibbled at her bottom lip and fisted his hands in her hair. He bit back a moan when she began to nibble at his lip as well. A flash of

heat swept through his body and his loins caught fire. He held her closer as he deepened the kiss, his hands sliding up her back and into her hair again. That rich, sexy taste of his filled her as she clung to him and their tongues danced to the beat of her heart. She tasted so sultry and so sweet, he wanted more from her. He just couldn't get enough of her.

She threw her arms around his neck and held on tightly as he took the kiss deeper. He was nibbling on her lips as if he had nothing better to do with his time, sending tiny spasms of pleasure to rock through her system. *Merlin, she wanted him*, she thought, *she wanted him so bad*. She felt his hands fist themselves tighter into her hair and she moaned, allowing him to angle the kiss, slipping his tongue between her lips and nibbling along her jaw line before she could bring him closer to her. She slipped her hands around his waist and gently slid her hands up his chest. He sighed, pulling his mouth from hers and feasting on her neck.

"Harry," she moaned, as her hands fisted in his shirt. His hands moved up her sides, gently skimming the sides of her breasts and making her stomach flutter as knots of desire formed in her gut.

Her skin was like silk, he thought as he skimmed his lips along her collarbone. It never ceased to amaze him how soft it was and how incredible she tasted. He felt her hands slide down his chest to slip beneath his tee shirt as her fingers touched his bare skin. He moaned as she touched him, her hands moving over his skin. When she had purred out his name, her voice husky and passionate, he almost died and all the blood in his body went straight to his loins. He pulled her closer and moved his hands up her shirt, cupping her breasts through the cotton of her bra, taking them into his hands.

Ginny gasped. He was touching her in places that no man ever had. She had never allowed any one else to touch her other than a few stolen kisses, but Harry's hands were on her skin, his calloused fingers sliding under the cotton of her bra to touch. She pulled at his shirt, dragging it over his head and then sliding her hands over his chest; his magnificent chest. She pulled away a bit to just look at him. He was built, she realized, in a lean sexy sort of way. Quidditch had obviously agreed with him and she knew that he had been working

out since after Christmas and ... he looked amazing. She had the proof of his work right in front of her and it was some very fine proof indeed. She looked up into his eyes, watching as the green rims seemed to brighten before he crushed his mouth back down to hers.

Their lips met, over and over as their tongues danced together. Harry began to gently slide her tee shirt upwards and then he pulled away to look at her as he pulled it over her head. Her hair was ruffled and the curls fell around her shoulders, framing her in those gorgeous fiery curls. Her eyes, the chocolate brown orbs that looked up at him were clouded in pleasure. He tossed the shirt backwards and as he watched her, slid his hands gently up her ribcage, grinning when she shivered in response to his touch. Then he unhooked the front clasp of her bra and watched her eyes darken when he took them into his hands.

He gently stroked her skin as he watched her. He flashed her one of his sexy grins causing her heart beat to accelerate before he leaned down and replaced his hands with his mouth. She gasped and her hands fisted themselves into his hair as he slowly slid his tongue along her exposed skin, tantalizingly and so slowly that she thought that she was going to die from the pleasure of it. Then before she could blink, his mouth was on hers again. She moaned his name and he pulled back and looked into her eyes.

"Ginny, we should stop." He murmured.

She nodded. "Yes, definitely. Too fast."

"Is it?" He asked as he continued to run his fingers along her ribcage. "You're so beautiful."

She blushed and he grinned as he noticed that the blush started at her belly button and worked its way up. "I love you."

He nodded. "I love you, too."

"It's late Harry and someone could come in." She replied.

"We don't sound convinced."

Ginny smiled. "No. Kiss me again."

"Okay." He murmured as he brought his lips to hers again. The kiss was short and sweet and when they pulled apart this time they could only sigh.

Ginny reached down for the shirt that Harry had discarded of her, wondering why she didn't feel more embarrassed to be completely topless in front of him. She pulled it over her head, ignoring her bra and handed Harry his own shirt. "Goodnight, Harry."

Harry pulled his tee shirt back over his head. "Yeah, goodnight, Gin."

They stood up and Ginny walked him to the door. Harry ran his fingers gently through her curls and then he kissed her softly. "See you in the morning."

Ginny smiled. "Ditto."

When she closed the bedroom door behind him she leaned back against it and sighed. There was no way that she was going to sleep soundly tonight.

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The weekend was a lot more fun once he had talked about the memory. He spent most of his time snogging Ginny at every possible opportunity; though he did have an interesting moment when he and Ginny were on their way outside and Fred and George opened a closet and Sirius and Lexy fell out. The twins had been positively giddy at the prospect of catching Sirius snogging Lexy in a closet. Especially since Potter Manor was filled with so many spare bedrooms. The twins had no immediate plans of letting him forget it.

Now it was Sunday afternoon and Harry stood in his father's bedroom with Sirius, James, and Remus in their tuxedos. Tonks had decided that they should all wear white tuxes with black shirts and that Remus would be in black with a white shirt. Harry wasn't a big fan of the white tux but it wasn't his wedding so he figured that he wasn't



allowed to complain. The wedding was going to be a small gathering in the garden of Potter Manor. Since Easter had fallen later in the year, the weather was beautiful, a little chilly but the sun was shining bright and the flowers were in bloom. The garden was beautiful and perfect for a wedding. Harry finished tying his black bowtie and then he glanced up at Remus who was standing in front of the mirror looking a little pale.

"Uncle Remus, are you alright?" Harry asked.

James grinned. "He's just a little nervous. Perfectly natural of course but it is amusing to see."

"What does she see in me?" Remus asked.

Sirius snorted. "How am I supposed to know? I've been questioning her sanity since day one."

Harry grinned. "I don't think that's helping him out, Uncle Sirius."

James laughed. "Moony, she loves you. She cares about you more than anything and she knows and accepts that you're a werewolf. She's beautiful in a unique and eccentric kind of way and she's spunky. A little klutzy but she's an Auror so she's powerful. There's nothing more that you can ask for."

Harry nodded. "I agree. You don't have anything to worry about."

Remus sighed. "But I'm so much older than her. Almost ten years."

"She doesn't care, Moony, and frankly neither should you." Sirius replied. "Besides, I'm six years older than Lexy."

"But you're not marrying Lexy." Remus replied.

Sirius nodded. "Good point." He sighed. "Look Moony, she loves you, you love her, and you're getting married in less than twenty minutes. Smile and be happy. Geesh! You think I'd have practice after James but you two are more different than night and day!"

James laughed. "I wasn't that bad was I?"

Sirius groaned. "You were horrible! Practically giddy! And every five damn minutes – is it time to go yet? I can't believe I'm marrying Evans! She won't change her mind, will she? Wow, this is unbelievable! I'm getting married. Is it time to go yet?"

Harry grinned. "He was really that bad?"

Remus nodded. "He really was. He was practically bouncing on the balls of his feet until your mum came down the aisle."

Sirius snorted. "Then his jaw hit the floor and he just stared at her with this look of pure lust in his eyes. You should have seen Harry Evans cracking his fists as he glared at him."

"Harry Evans?" Harry asked.

James nodded. "Lily's dad. We named you after him. His name was actually Harold but we wanted to give you a warmer name so we just made it Harry."

"I didn't know. You don't talk about them too much."

James nodded. "I know. I didn't know them too well so I really didn't have much to say. They weren't alive very long after the wedding."

Sirius slapped his hands together. "Alright! Enough of the sadness! Let's get this show on the road! Remus, are you ready to be tied down to one woman for the rest of your God-fearing life?"

Remus grinned. "Yeah, I'm more than ready."

Sirius shuddered and slapped him on the back. "Brave, brave soul."

James shook his head. "You know, one day you're going to fall and take the plunge and I'm going to laugh because you didn't escape like you always claimed you would. Marriage is a wonderful thing."

Sirius shook his head. "Thanks, but no thanks. Come on; let's get this

show on the road!"

\*\*\*\*\*

Tonks stood in front of the mirror in the long white dress. It had a high neck and left her back bare. The dress was slightly above the knee and flared out a bit at the bottom. It was satin. She had let her hair come in as its natural mousy brown. Ginny and Hermione had helped her pile the curls up on top of her head in a pretty fashion.

"Well, how do I look?"

Ginny grinned. "Beautiful. Remus' eyes are going to pop out of his head when he sees you."

Hermione giggled. "More than usual you mean."

Lexy smiled. "You two are horrible. I think that you enjoy seeing Remus looking like he's in shock entirely too much. Tonks, you look wonderful and you look happy."

"Well, since I feel both then it's a good thing." She turned at the sound of the door and grinned. "Da!"

Ted Tonks, a short man with tons of thick dark brown hair on the top of his head hurried forward to embrace his daughter. "I can't believe that my little Nymph is getting married!"

Tonks grinned. "I know! It's hard to believe. Where's Mum?"

"She's in the powder room trying to hide her tears." Ted replied.

"I'm right here, Teddy." Andromeda Tonks replied from the doorway. Her dark brown hair was down to her waist and pinned slightly to the side as her brown eyes twinkled at her daughter. "Nymphadora, you look beautiful."

Ginny, Hermione, and Lexy slowly slipped out of the room to give Tonks a minute with her parents.

“Tonks really does look wonderful! I’m so happy for her and I can’t believe that she’s marrying Remus!” Ginny replied.

Lexy nodded. “I think that their perfect for each other. I can’t believe that Tonks asked me to be her Maid of Honour but I guess when you become friends as quickly as we did things like this happen. She’s become my best friend in the whole world!”

Ginny nodded. “Yeah and Hermione and I as bridesmaids, it’s unbelievable! But she does have awesome taste in dresses! If it wasn’t a wedding party, Mum would never let me wear this.”

The dresses for the bridesmaids were bright Kelly green and were low cut in the front and in the back. The dress sliced off diagonally above the knee and tied around the neck. They were satin and very pretty.

Hermione grinned. “I still can’t believe that I’m wearing this dress!”

“Oh, Hermione, you look good even if it isn’t your normal style!”

Lexy nodded. “You two look great and so do I.”

“You know Prof – I mean Lexy, you really do look good in the dress.” Ginny replied. “I bet Sirius’ eyes are going to pop out of his head as well.”

Lexy smiled. “Thanks, Ginny, and I know I can say the same about Harry because I know how he looks at you in sweats.”

Ginny giggled. “Oh, I do hope I impress him.”

Hermione grinned. “Trust me, that’ll happen!”

They turned at the sound of the door opening and grinned at Tonks who was standing in between her parents. She grinned down at the engagement ring on her hand. Remus had gotten her white gold with a rainbow pearl as the center stone. The ring fit Tonks to a tee. “I’m getting married.”

Ginny grinned. "Yes, you are so let's go."

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry stood at the front of the garden next to Sirius, James, and Remus. Remus had a big smile on his face and his eyes were positively beaming with happiness. He knew that even though he had protested that he wasn't good enough for Tonks, Remus wanted her more than anything. He was in love with her. He glanced over at Sirius, wondering briefly if he was really going to never get married but then all of the thoughts vanished from his mind when he saw Ginny coming down the aisle.

The green dress that she wore made her look even more beautiful than usual. The colour made the fiery red of her hair stand out even more and she made his mouth water. Harry physically felt his mouth drop open as he stared at her. She gave him a small smirk as she began to make her way up to the front. When an elbow hit him in the stomach his breath came out in a whooshing sound.

"Close your mouth, Harry, it's impolite to stare – hiya –" Sirius replied as his mouth fell open as well when Lexy came into sight.

Harry grinned. "Uh-huh and you were saying something to me. They look incredible."

Sirius merely swallowed and nodded. Harry stole a quick glance at Ron and only grinned at the dumbstruck expression on his friend's face. Would he ever admit his feelings for Hermione? Harry didn't think so.

The ceremony was beautiful. Remus and Tonks exchanged vows and promised to love, cherish, and take care of each other forever. They connected their wands and sealed their new promises with a kiss and as they hurried down the aisle for pictures, James called out above the crowd.

"Party in the manor!"

The party was definitely pretty interesting. The wedding wasn't very

big and had only consisted of the Marauders, Harry, Ginny, Ron, Hermione, the rest of the Weasleys excluding Percy, the Order excluding Snape who for some unknown reason had declined the invitation, surprisingly Dumbledore made an appearance even though he was in hiding, and Tonks' parents who joined the Order while in attendance. There was music and dancing and an incredible meal cooked by Maddy and Mickey. By the end of the night when Remus and Tonks left for their honeymoon to Aruba, everyone could honestly say that they had had a great time.

Harry went to bed that night with a smile on his face. He couldn't have been more happy for them.

They returned to school the next day, happy for the Easter Monday vacation even if it was mostly spent revising for O.W.L.s. But things picked up quickly the next day when Fred and George let out a bunch of fireworks that couldn't be vanished or stunned or anything else. Umbridge spent the next few days running around the castle trying to get rid of fireworks that no one else could get rid of because the teachers assured her that with the new rules they didn't know if they were ALLOWED to do that. All in all, Harry was impressed with the twins' initiative and he was silently dreading his next potions class as he knew that he had to speak to Snape by his next lesson. Otherwise, he would be responsible for the chaos that would erupt between his father and Snape.

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## **Chapter 45: The Department of Mysteries**

**Author's Notes:** okay i know this chapter seems a little rushed in areas but i had to explain and i didnt want to rewrite the book - im sure u understand. or well i hope u do. and its prob not my best chapter ever but its the best i can do at the moment im tired lol. please review!

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## **Chapter XLV – The Department of Mysteries**

**“It’s time,”** the voice murmured as Harry made his way down the boys’ dormitory one evening. He looked around, wondering where the voice was coming from and at the same time a weird sensation had formed in the pit of his stomach because he thought that the voice came from within his own mind. He wondered if maybe he was going a little crazy, after all, this wasn’t the first time that that particular phrase had jumped into his mind.

**“It’s time. The truth must be revealed. Don’t you want to know?”**  
The voice came again.

Harry glanced around the room again, afraid of what he might see. The voice sounded so familiar, almost like one of those weird dreams that you had but couldn’t remember until an overwhelming sense of déjà vu approached you. This weirdness had started two days earlier and at first Harry had simply chalked it up to exam stress. With O.W.L.s coming up soon he had thought that it was a good enough excuse. *But what did it mean? How could this voice be coming from within his own mind when the thoughts weren’t even his? Was it really coming from his mind? Was it even possible to do so?* He wasn’t sure and he didn’t know what he was more afraid of, the idea that the voice might be real or the idea that it wasn’t.

He also wasn’t sure if he should tell anyone about it. He remembered how in his second year Hermione had told him that hearing voices wasn’t a good sign, not even in the wizarding world. But that voice had come from within the walls of the school and he had heard it because he happened to understand Parseltongue. He decided on the spot that he couldn’t put off his meeting with Snape any longer. The voice was worrying him too much and maybe Occulmency lessons would make it go away or help him determine if he was going insane.

He stumbled as he walked down the hallway and gasped when the image appeared in his mind.

**The huge house was crumbling down, the stone and the cute cottage-like home, destroyed. The cobblestone walk cracked**

**under the pressure and the jet of green light that glowed from the house shattered the windows. The trees blew restlessly in the wind and the cries of the baby echoed in the still of the night.**

**The street was deserted and only the screams of a child could be heard.**

Harry gasped as he pulled himself out of the image of a destroyed Godric's Hollow. He had never seen the house before. How did he remember a house that he had only spent the first year of his life in, a house that he couldn't ever remember seeing? It didn't make any sense for that image to come up into his mind. It only made him more nervous. *The truth about what? Where was this voice coming from and why was he seeing things in his mind that he didn't remember?*

He wondered if maybe it had something to do with his elemental powers. After all, he remembered James mentioning something about possible psychic abilities but he didn't think that that was his problem. He was positive that he wasn't a seer in anyway but that still didn't help him out with the mysterious voice.

**"It's time. You know what you must do, it's your destiny."**

Harry pulled himself out of his thoughts and banged on the door to Snape's office, determined to ignore the voice. All he could do was gulp when he saw the eyes of his professor narrow dangerously at the sight of him.

"Hello, sir."

"Potter, what was the last thing that I said to you?"

Harry gulped. He had never seen Snape look so angry. He was tempted to leave but the idea of that voice made him speak anyway. And what he spoke was probably not the smartest thing. "Sir, I know what you said, but really, don't you think that you're being a little irrational?"

"Irrational?" Snape snapped, grabbing Harry's arm and yanking him into his office. He slammed the door shut behind him. "You expect me



to be rational when you invaded my own personal thoughts? Did it ever occur to you that I placed those memories in the pensieve because they were private and that I didn't want anyone else viewing them?"

Harry nodded. "Yes, it did occur to me and I know that I was wrong but I was curious. And I'm sorry that I viewed them! But did it ever occur to you that I was shocked and appalled by what I saw?" Harry exclaimed. "I love my Da and I love the stories that I grew up listening to about their adventures. But I never knew that my Da could be so cruel! I've always been proud to be compared to him and I always ignored you when you told me that I was arrogant and conceited just like my father because I didn't believe you! I'm not arrogant or conceited and you would know that if you took the time for even a second to realize that I AM NOT MY FATHER! I am my own person! I'm nothing like my father other than by physical appearances, some Quidditch skills and maybe a few personality traits! I'm sorry that my Da treated you so badly when you were at Hogwarts but GET OVER IT! He says that he regrets his actions and I believe him. He even offered to come over here himself and officially apologize to you! But I told him not to because I figured that you would end up killing each other knowing how safe and sound both of your tempers are! Dumbledore asked you to teach me Occulmency but because of one stupid thing that I happened to see in a memory of what my father did to you when you were fifteen you get all bloody bent out of shape and refuse to teach me anymore! How bloody old are you? I can be more mature than that! GET OVER IT! And I need you to teach me Occulmency and you WILL continue to do so or I will go to Dumbledore and tell him about what an insufferable prat you are!"

Snape sneered. "You are extraordinarily like your father, Potter! How dare you talk to me that way?"

"I'll talk to you any bloody damn well I like! I'm tired of your petty insults and your attitude! And you will teach me Occulmency again!" Harry demanded, his eyes flashing in his anger.

Snape smirked. "Fine." Then before Harry could blink he had whipped out his wand and had it pointed at Harry. "Legilimens!"

Harry felt the instant pushing into his mind and he silently called forth his elementals, asking them to help keep his walls strong and to work on building a new one. He had never attempted that before. He felt the invasion pushing harder, trying to get in and he attacked. Harry wasn't sure if he had planned it or not but by using his mind he willed a hand to push Snape away and with a loud bang he felt Snape leave his mind and watched as he flew across the room, slamming back into a shelf full of jars that crashed open all over his office floor.

Snape stood up, his breathing heavy and his wand at his side. "Well, Potter, I'd say that our lessons have concluded. You've just mastered Occulmency."

"What?" Harry asked.

"You heard me. I attacked you and you were completely unprepared yet you pushed me out within seconds. There's nothing else that I can teach you. All you have left to do is practice. Now get the hell out of my office."

"I – really?" Harry asked, completely bewildered by the sudden change of events.

"Yes. Now get out of my office!" Snape demanded.

Harry nodded as he quietly stepped back out in the hall. He wasn't sure how to react. He had definitely thrown Snape from his mind almost on first contact. He had never done that before, at least not so quickly. He tried to think about what he had done differently and then he grinned. He had subconsciously called upon his elementals and had them not only protecting his mind but also working on building walls in his mind at the same time. Apparently that had made a difference. He grinned to himself as he realized that he had had his elementals doing two separate jobs in his mind at the same time, something that he had never accomplished before and he wondered just how his Da was going to react to that news. After all, James hadn't wanted him to start doing that until at least September. He hadn't thought that he was advanced enough.

With that on his mind, Harry pulled out his mirror and slid into a

nearby broom closet. "Da."

A few seconds later James' face appeared in the mirror. "Hi, Harry, what's going on?"

Harry grinned. "I just talked to Snape."

"And?"

Harry's grin widened as he began to explain exactly what had happened in Snape's office. Once he was finished he chewed his bottom lip nervously for a moment. "So I sort of moved a little faster on the whole elemental magic thing."

James nodded. "Yeah, you really did. I think that I forgot how much more powerful you are than me. I never managed to do anything like that until I was seventeen. It's one of the reasons why I never thought of using my elementals against Voldemort because I hadn't really accomplished that magic yet."

"How old were you when you did fully accomplish the wandless and elemental skills?" Harry asked.

"Twenty-one, maybe twenty-two. I didn't practice too much though as I was busy caring for your mother which might be a reason why it took me so much longer. You're only fifteen and you're already almost two years ahead of me. That's amazing, Harry!" James replied.

Harry grinned. "So now what?"

"Now we up your lessons."

"Meaning?"

"Your elemental magic lessons are going to be a lot more intense."

"How intense?"

"Well, we're going to have you using all of your elementals at once. We'll start with bringing forth two like you used today and then we'll

move on from there. Let's see how well you manage during Sunday's lesson and we'll go from there."

Harry nodded. "Sounds good. So I guess I'll see you on Sunday?"

James nodded. "Yeah. One more thing Harry, go talk to Dumbledore."

"About what?"

James sighed. "Let him test your mind just to see if Snape is positive that there's nothing left for him to teach you. I don't want you to get gypped."

"Alright, I'll see what I can do but wait – how am I supposed to do that? He's not even here anymore."

James sighed. "Damn, I forgot. Alright, never mind that, we'll work that out later."

Harry nodded. "Okay."

He smiled. "Good, see you later."

Harry watched as his father's face disappeared from the mirror before he shoved it back into his pocket and stepped out of the closet. He was just closing the door behind him when he heard a voice behind him call out his name. He turned around to see Neville coming towards him. "Hey, Nev."

Neville nodded. "Hi, Harry, why were you in a broom closet?"

Harry grinned. "I was er – thinking."

Neville nodded but he didn't look convinced. "Okay, anyway I was on my way to the library but I thought I'd tell you that Ginny's looking for you."

"Thanks."

He waved goodbye and headed up to the common room. Ginny met him at the door with a huge grin on her face. "Harry, you're never going to believe it! Well, you might considering it's the twins but you get my point!"

"Believe what?" He asked as he pulled her over to his favourite armchair and snuggled her down into his lap.

"Gred and Forge. They have some type of evil plot planned for Umbitch tomorrow and they plan on leaving Hogwarts."

"Leaving?"

Ginny nodded. "They won't tell me what it is but they said that they've had enough of Umbitch's crap and that they were only staying because of Dumbledore anyway. They bought a store in Diagon Alley to sell WWW products and they plan on just opening shop. Mum's going to have a fit!"

Harry stared down at Ginny in shock. "So they're just going to drop out? Your mum is going to have a fit!"

"Did you say that Fred and George are leaving?" Angelina asked from behind them.

Ginny turned around to look over at her captain and nodded. "Yes, they plan too."

Angelina nodded. "Nice of them to tell me."

Harry gave Ginny a puzzled look as Angelina stomped off. "What was that about?"

Ginny sighed. "Fred and Angelina have sort of been dating off and on since the Yule Ball. I hope Fred smartens up. Angie's in love with him and I know he loves her. He'll be the world's biggest idiot if he blows it." She explained. "I'm so curious now about tomorrow. And it turns out that Lee is the culprit for the nifflers in Umbitch's office."

"Ah, good idea really. They attack her so bloody badly because of

those ugly rings she wears on her pudgy little fingers.” Harry replied.

Ginny laughed and kissed his cheek. “And I don’t feel even a little bit sorry for her.”

Harry nodded and was just about to tell her about his meeting with Snape when the voice came again. **“It’s time. Why aren’t you curious? Don’t you want to know? It is your destiny to die. It was prophesized so.”**

“Harry?” Ginny asked, waving her hand in front of his face. His face had hardened at the first sound of the voice and he was now staring into space with a weird look on his face. “Are you alright?”

He shook his head and smiled at her, wondering briefly why the voice was still there. “Yeah, I’m fine, sorry. Hey, I don’t have to take Occulmency anymore.”

She glanced at him with a disbelieving look on her face but she obviously decided not to comment. “Why not?”

He explained to her about everything that happened, including his elementals. “So now my lessons are supposed to get a bit better or more intense according to Da.”

She grinned. “That is so neat. I’m so proud of you.” She kissed him softly and he grinned.

“Well, I’m proud of you too.”

She laughed as she slipped her arms around his neck. “Oh what for?”

He shrugged. “For being you.” He leaned down to capture her lips in his just as Ron called his name. “Mate, your killing me here.”

Ron rolled his eyes. “You can stop snogging my sister for two bloody seconds. I was wondering if you wanted to work on the animagus tonight. Hermione and I are kind of in the mood.”

Harry shrugged and glanced at Ginny. “What do you think?”

“I think it’s a good idea. Let’s go!”

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The animagus lessons did go very well. Ginny managed to get a bit of reddish gold tint around her neck and Ron and Hermione managed to change their right hands. The three of them were progressing very well.

Fred and George’s surprise turned out to be quite a surprise. They had made a portable swamp and dropped it into the corridor with the statue of Gregory the Smarmy. Umbridge completely flipped out and started yelling at them and telling them that they would be expelled. The two of them had just grinned at each other, summoned their brooms and asked Peeves to give her hell from them. The poltergeist, for the first time in history, bowed to them and promised to do as they asked. Then they had flown out of the school without turning back.

Everyone in school was talking about their great escape. People were constantly wishing that they could do the same thing. Peeves took their advice to heart and was constantly causing trouble for Umbridge and Filch. And the best part was that Umbridge couldn’t get rid of the swamp. Harry figured Flitwick could do it in a second but the teachers were enjoying watching her squirm just as much as the students were. It was turning out to be quite an interesting year.

The last Quidditch match of the year turned out to be Gryffindor versus Ravenclaw and they were dreading it. But it turned out that Harry and Hermione never got to watch what happened to be a really good game. Hagrid had approached them and finally revealed his secret over why he had been so late coming back and why he was always injured. His secret was named Grawp and he was apparently his baby brother – though a fully grown giant. Being Hagrid he had decided to try to teach him English and he was positive that he was a very friendly guy. Harry and Hermione were forced to disagree. The situation turned out to be a bit worse when the centaurs showed up and told them that they were no longer welcome in the forest. Hagrid was on their bad side for saving Firenze’s life.

When they returned to the common room they were surprised to learn that Gryffindor had won the match and that Ron had been amazing. He was being viewed as a kind of hero. Once the celebrations died down, they told Ron and Ginny all about Grawp. Ron was horrified and couldn't quite get past the idea that there was a giant who was Hagrid's little brother living in the Forbidden Forest.

Harry's elemental lessons picked up quickly as James had him experimenting with using all of his elementals at once and having them do completely different tasks. At first he had only been able to control two at a time but as the weeks wore on he was able to add to it and his control increased on them. His powers were growing and James was thoroughly impressed with him. Lessons were over now until the summer because James wanted him to study for his O.W.L.s.

O.W.L.s were fast approaching and when they finally did arrive, people were getting pretty stressed out. Harry's first exam was Charms and it started out pretty well. In fact, he thought that he was doing pretty well until the Astronomy part of his Divination exam. The exam was interrupted by Umbridge and some ministry officials going down to Hagrid's cabin to try to arrest him. Hagrid fought them off and when McGonagall tried to help she took four stunners to the chest and had to be brought to St. Mungo's. Hagrid escaped and Harry assumed that he went to join Dumbledore somewhere.

The school was very subdued after the attack and Harry buried himself in studying to try to keep his mind off of everything. His last exam was History of Magic and he had just finished his exam when he found himself getting drowsy and he drifted off. He was suddenly walking in the corridor again, doors were opening and he was running now, through the circular room, the long rectangular room full of an odd mechanical clicking, through the cathedral-sized Hall full of shelves with glass spheres and then he was at row number ninety-seven and turning left. At the end of the row there was a shadowy image of a man and as Harry moved closer he pointed his wand at the shelf and the voice came again:

**“Choose! It's time for the truth! Don't you want to know why?”**

The man disappeared and an image of Godric's Hollow destroyed



appeared in his mind and then he could see himself standing in a broken crib crying as Lily Potter lay like death on the floor beside him. He woke up, gasping awake and causing the examiner to come over and see if he was alright. He merely nodded, handed in his exam and asked to go to the hospital wing. But he didn't go to the hospital wing; instead he headed into Umbridge's office, not caring if she was in there or not. He needed to make a floo call immediately and he didn't care what the consequences were.

Harry fell to his knees in front of her fire and threw the powder in before calling out Number Twelve Grimmauld Place. He felt the familiar spinning sensation before he found his head in the kitchen and facing Dobby.

"Dobby, where's Dumbledore?"

Dobby nodded. "He is here in the living room, sir, in a meeting."

"I need to talk to him, now!" Harry demanded, figuring that it was blind luck that Dumbledore just happened to be there.

Dobby nodded and hurried out of the room. A few minutes later, Dumbledore came in behind him.

"Harry, this is an odd surprise. What can I do for you and how did you know I would be here?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry shrugged. "I didn't know I just took a wild guess and I have something to ask of you. What's in the Department of Mysteries and how does it relate to how I got my scar?"

Dumbledore looked quite taken aback by the question. "Excuse me?"

"You heard me, sir. I want to know."

Dumbledore sighed. "Harry, there's nothing and even if there was you're still too young to understand. I'm sorry."

"You're not sorry! And what are you keeping from me? The truth about what?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "Now, is not the time, Harry."

"Yeah well I think now is the time! These dreams about that corridor are getting stronger. There's something there that will tell me the truth and I know that you know what that truth is!"

"Harry, this isn't the time to go into this. You're too young to understand the truth and I want you to forget about that corridor."

Harry glared at Dumbledore. "I can't just forget the corridor when it haunts me every damn minute. There's a voice in my head ... it's telling me to go there and I know it's a trap but ... I want to know the truth! I want to know, why did Voldemort try to kill me as a baby?"

Dumbledore's eyes looked sad for a minute. "Harry, forget the corridor. Don't listen to the voice. You're too young to know the truth."

Harry could feel the anger welling up inside of him. "Why won't you tell me the truth? I want to know why —"

His speech was interrupted by someone pulling on his shoulders and yanking him back to Umbridge's office. He turned around and found himself face to face with the toad herself.

"And just what do you think you're doing, Mr. Potter?" She asked in her falsely sweet voice.

"Using your floo and I wasn't finished."

She glared at him. "Oh, I think that you were more then finished. What right do you have to break into my office like that?"

He shrugged. "Well, since you've made it so that we can't use our own flooes I wasn't exactly left with choices now, was I?"

Her eyes narrowed and she snapped her fingers impatiently. The door opened and her Inquisitorial Squad came in each holding someone that Harry didn't expect. Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Luna, and Neville were all being held tightly in their grasps.

“What are you doing with them?”

Umbridge smiled. “Well, funny thing, you see. I noticed them walking the halls and I have Sensory charms in my office to know who comes in now and I knew it was you. So I thought, what better way to make my point than to keep someone you hold dear, close by, and lookie lookie what I found.”

Harry glared at her. “Let them go! They weren’t doing anything! They didn’t even know that I was coming here.”

Umbridge grinned. “Oh, I don’t think so. Now, why don’t you tell me who you were talking to in that fire?”

“That’s none of your business, it was a private call.”

She smirked and turned to Malfoy. “Draco, kindly go get Professor Snape for me.” Malfoy nodded and hurried out of the room and Umbridge turned back to Harry. “I have ways of getting you to talk, you know.”

“I’d like to see you try.”

They stayed there, glaring at each other until Snape came in a few minutes later.

“Yes, Dolores?”

Umbridge smiled sweetly. “Severus, kindly fetch me your strongest truth potion.”

Snape shook his head. “You didn’t use all of the bottle that I gave you, did you? You only needed a few drops.”

“Yes, well, I need more.”

Snape nodded. “Alright, well I can make more, it’ll take about a month and –”

“A month! You stupid man! Can’t you see that I need it right now! I just caught Potter using my fire to speak to someone!”

Snape smirked. “Oh really? Potter breaking the rules, now that’s a surprise.”

Harry sneered. “I needed to know the truth about the dream with the doors but some people don’t find it fit to tell me.” He replied, hoping Snape would remember his reoccurring dream about the corridor and understand who he had been trying to reach.

Snape shrugged. “Not my problem, Potter.” He turned on his heel and left and Umbridge let out a little shrieking noise of frustration.

“Fine! I’ll do this my own way!” She pulled out her wand, which was surprisingly short, and pointed it at Harry. “You tell me what I want to know or I’ll use the Cruciatus on you.”

“NO!” Hermione screamed. “You can’t! That’s against the law!”

Umbridge shrugged. “Well, I won’t be caught now, will I?” She turned back to Harry. “Are you going to tell me?”

“Nope.”

Umbridge glared at him and raised her wand. “Cru –”

“WAIT!” Hermione shrieked. “I’ll tell you!”

Umbridge grinned. “Good girl.”

The next thing that came out of Hermione’s mouth surprised Harry to no end. She made up this cock and bull story about Dumbledore having them make some type of weapon and that it was now finished and it was Harry’s job to try to contact Dumbledore but they didn’t know where he was. The sad part was that Umbitch bought it.

The next thing he knew, Harry found himself heading into the Forbidden Forest with Hermione and Umbitch. He had no idea where he was going but apparently Hermione knew because she kept going

deeper and deeper. Then the centaurs came along with Grawp. It was a hectic moment but basically, Umbitch was carried away by centaurs as Grawp chased the centaurs away and Harry and Hermione managed to escape to the edge of the forest where they found some Thestrals sniffing them with excitement as they were covered in blood because of Grawp.

Hermione grabbed him and shoved him back against a tree. "Now what the hell is really going on, Harry?"

Harry sighed. "I have to go to the Department of Mysteries."

"Why?"

"Because the truth about everything is there, about my scar, about why I have it, it's there and since Dumbledore doesn't feel it's fit to tell me anything then I'll go to the ministry and find out myself. Dumbledore knows but he won't tell me." He explained.

Hermione stared at him surprise. "Harry, how do you know that this is there?"

"Because a voice in my head told me so Hermione and I just realized who that voice is." Harry replied, almost to himself.

"Who? A voice in your head, Harry? I highly doubt that that's the best thing to listen to."

"It's Voldemort! He can talk in my mind and I can't block him out because he's connected through my scar! He knows the truth! And I'm going to find out what it is." Harry replied stubbornly.

Hermione shook her head, biting her lip nervously. "You can't, Harry! Can't you see; you'll be walking right into a trap?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't care anymore, Hermione. No one wants to tell the truth and there's something big there, something that explains everything. Like why he wanted to kill me as a baby? And why I didn't die? I need to know and I'm going and there's nothing that you can do to stop me."

“But I suppose that you could use back up.” Ron replied casually as he leaned back against a tree nearby.

“Ron! How did you guys get down here?” Harry asked as he looked from Ron to Ginny to Neville to Luna.

Ron grinned. “Well, Ginny elbowed Draco in the gut and then used her bat bogeys and the next thing I knew we were cursing everyone and we decided to follow you two. So, you’re going to find out the truth, Harry, and I’m coming with you.”

Harry shook his head. “I don’t think so. Like Hermione said, I’m walking into a trap and I know it! But I am not going to bring others into it with me! It’s me that Voldemort wants!”

Ginny grabbed his hand. “I’d like to see you stop us from going. We’ll just follow you. There’s no way that were letting you do this by yourself.”

Harry smirked. “And there’s no way that I’m letting you come.”

“What was the DA then?” Neville asked. “Some kind of joke?”

“No, of course not!”

“Then why teach us how to defend ourselves and then not allow us to use our skills?” Luna asked.

Harry groaned. “This is not the time! Voldemort wants to kill me! And he – ahh!” He moaned, slamming his hand over his scar. An image flashed through his brain of the Marauders, the three of them were chained to the wall and Voldemort was torturing them with the Cruciatus. Harry paled as he came back to himself and even as he spoke he knew it was a trap, a mirage that hadn’t been real. “He has the Marauders.”

“What?” Hermione asked.

“There’s no time to talk. I have to go and you five are not coming. End

of story.”

Ginny smirked. “Whatever, we’ll just wait for more Thestrals; after all, Hagrid said that they give awesome directions.”

Neville nodded. “Yeah and we’ll just tell them to find you.”

Harry ignored them as he climbed onto the back of a nearby Thestral. “I said no. You’re not risking your life. I need to save my da and my uncles and I need to know the truth.”

He took off into the air without a backwards glance at his friends. He arrived at the ministry quickly and when he landed he groaned out loud when he saw Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Neville, and Luna land beside him.

“What did I say? This is a trap! A life or death situation! What part of that don’t you understand?” He demanded.

Ginny grabbed his hand in hers. “What part of we’re your friends and we’re not letting you do this alone don’t you understand?” She stood on her toes and kissed him softly. “I love you and I’m not going to let you walk in there alone. Now let’s go.”

Harry sighed and as he led them into the ministry he felt like he was leading them towards death. Even as they found their way into the Department of Mysteries Harry had a feeling that the last image he had seen was a fake but his fear that it wasn’t was stronger than his logic at the moment. They found the room exactly like in Harry’s dream and after a few mishaps they managed to get to the end of row ninety-seven and the voice returned.

**“Learn the truth!”**

“There’s nothing here, Harry.” Hermione replied.

Harry nodded. “There is, we just have to find it.”

“Hey, there’s something here with your name on it,” Ron replied as he pointed up at the shelf above Harry’s head.

Harry glanced up to where Ron was pointing and found the small orb that read:

***S.P.T. to A.P.W.B.D.  
Dark Lord  
and  
Harry Potter (?)***

He reached up to touch it and Hermione shook her head furiously. "Harry, I don't think that you should touch that!"

Harry shrugged. "It has my name on it."

He picked the orb up and it felt warm in his hands. He wondered if it really contained the truth that he was desperate to hear. Loud popping noises surrounded them and when they turned around they found themselves face to face with some Death Eaters that conveniently held Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Lestrange.

Malfoy smirked. "Well, well, well, the Dark Lord's always right."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"That he knew you would come and retrieve the prophecy for him."

"Prophecy?" Harry asked. "Is that what this is? So why does he want it?"

Bellatrix let out a fake laugh. "Please, tell me you're jesting!"

"Nope, why does he want it?"

"That Potter, is none of your business!" Malfoy sneered.

The next bit happened so quickly that it was an escape and nothing more. Harry urged his friends to break the orbs around them as they made a run for it after Ginny was threatened. The Death Eaters – Malfoy, Bellatrix, Nott, Rudolphus, Jugson, Crabbe, Goyle, Rabastan, Dolohov, Macnair, Avery, Rookwood, and Mulciber split up around



them as the six of them tried to make a run for it.

Spells were flying all over the place as they tried to run and escape from the Death Eaters' grasp and to escape before anyone got seriously hurt. Hermione was injured and knocked unconscious and Neville's wand broke and Harry began to panic. He had led his friends into this trap because of his own stupid need to know the truth. Curiosity killed the cat so the muggles always said. He stunned the Death Eaters coming at him and made a run for it, holding the prophecy tightly in his hands with Neville on his heels. Then Bellatrix grabbed Neville by the robes.

"Give me the prophecy, Potter, or I'll torture your friend here."

Harry gulped as she kept her wand pointed at his neck. He couldn't risk his friend and he knew it.

"Don't do it, Harry!" Neville exclaimed. "I'm not worth it!"

Harry shook his head. He slowly began to hand over the prophecy when the door burst open and Order members barged in – Kingsley, Tonks, Moody, Sirius, Remus, James, and Lexy. They began to stun Death Eaters at random and Neville managed to escape in the chaos. Duels erupted all over the place between the adults as Harry held the prophecy closer.

James turned to look at him when he stunned Malfoy. "Run! Get out of here, Harry!"

Harry nodded and he turned to escape. Spells flew his way and he dodged and ducked out of the way. Malfoy charged at him and Harry tossed the prophecy to Neville as Sirius came and rammed into Dolohov, finding himself involved in another full out duel. Harry hurried over to Neville and tried to pull him away from the battle. Neville slipped the prophecy into his pocket just as his robes broke open. He let out a gasp as it fell to ground, shattering into hundreds of pieces as a shadowy figure in flowing robes rose from the pieces, but what she said they didn't know as it was too loud.

"Harry, I'm so sorry."

Harry shook his head. "No Nev, it's alright. It was stupid to come here anyway. Come on, let's go!"

Just as they were heading towards the door, it flew open and Dumbledore stepped into the room, power was radiating from his body and as soon as the Death Eaters saw him they began to run. Dumbledore used a spell to hold them all in one circle so that they couldn't apparate. Only Bellatrix was still there, she was duelling heavily with Sirius as he laughed and dodged her curses. Harry watched, as she became more and more angry because she wasn't hitting him and then a jet of purple light shot out of her wand and smacked him in the chest. He looked surprised for a moment and then he stumbled back. Lexy jumped to her feet.

"Sirius!"

He grinned at her and then he stumbled and fell behind into the black veil as Lexy jumped towards him, grabbing his arm, a jet of red light hitting her leg as the two of them tangled together and fell into the veil.

Harry watched, his eyes darting back and forth as he waited for them to come out. But minutes passed and there was nothing.

"Sirius!" Harry yelled.

James and Remus both grabbed Harry's arm. "They're gone, Harry."

"NO!"

James nodded, tears in his eyes. "That's the Veil of Death and when you fall into it, you pass into the underworld and once you're there, you don't come back. They're gone."

"I don't believe you! Sirius and Lexy aren't dead! No!"

Remus nodded as he too wiped tears from his eyes. "They're gone. We were too late. Sirius and Lexy are dead."

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## Chapter 46: Truthful Surprises

**Author's Notes:** please review - and for those of u that asked about how i ended it - i told u i wasnt going to do something so why would u bleive it? please review!!

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### Chapter XLVI – Truthful Surprises

Remus nodded as he too wiped tears from his eyes. “They’re gone. We were too late. Sirius and Lexy are dead.”

Harry stared up at Remus and James, shaking his head no as his eyes darted back and forth to the veil. That was when he noticed Bellatrix making a run for it towards the exit. His wand was in his hand quickly and before anyone could stop him, he bolted after her. He wasn’t going to let her get away with killing his godfather and his professor.

He found himself in the brain room and managed to see Ron lying on the ground, still covered in the slimy brains that he had touched. He gave a silent prayer that he would be okay and continued on his way after Bellatrix who had noticed now that she was being followed. She sent a jet of purple light in his direction but he managed to dodge it and he almost crashed into Luna and Ginny who were both unconscious against a nearby wall. He closed his eyes for a moment, hoping desperately that they were okay and only ran faster.

Bellatrix flew into the lobby of the Ministry and turned to aim a spell at Harry. He jumped out of the way, hiding behind the Fountain of Magical Brethren. He could feel his anger rising. This was the woman who had just caused the death of Sirius and Lexy; this was the woman who had gone to Azkaban for torturing Neville’s parents into insanity; this was the woman who had killed Tracy’s mother. He whipped out his wand and yelled out the Cruciatus Curse. Bellatrix fell to the ground, yelping in pain but was up again in seconds. She let out a cold laugh.

“Potter, have you never used an Unforgivable before? No wonder why it didn’t work. You’ve got to mean it! You’ve got to really want to cause pain.” She yelled. “Let me show you!”

Before the words could leave her mouth, Harry ducked behind the fountain again and he heard the crashing of the spell as it met the head of the wizard statue in the fountain.

“I’ll give you one last chance, Potter. Give me the prophecy.”

Harry let out a laugh. “The prophecy? Ooh Bella, your master is not going to be happy with you. It’s gone.”

“Don’t be ridiculous! Give it to me!” She demanded.

Harry grinned. “It’s gone. It crashed back in the Department of Mysteries.”

“I don’t believe you!” She shrieked. “Accio! Accio! Accio!”

Harry laughed as nothing happened and she began to look even more frustrated. “It’s gone. I don’t have it and neither does Voldemort.”

“I’m afraid he’s not lying, Bella.” Voldemort replied as he appeared in the middle of the hall. “I’m afraid that the prophecy is indeed gone.”

“Master!” Bellatrix replied. “Oh my lord, we tried, but then members of the Order came and Dumbledore. He’s here, in the building!”

Voldemort merely waved her away. “At least you did do one good thing for me. Killing off that worthless Black cousin of yours.” He merely smiled when Harry’s eyes heated up with anger. “Oh, I’m sorry, was he a friend of yours?”

Harry pointed his wand at him. “I’ll do it.”

Voldemort feigned a look of surprise. “Do it? Hmm, I’m sure you will. Did you come all the way down here to learn the truth, Harry? The truth about why I’ve always wanted to kill you? Why I gave you that

scar?" He smirked. "Well, I'm tired of waiting and I'm tired of playing games. I should have done this a long time ago. Avada Kedavra!"

Harry couldn't move as the jet of green light headed in his direction and then he jumped back in shock when the headless golden statue of the wizard from the fountain jumped in front of him causing the spell to bounce from his chest.

"What the —" Voldemort began and then he sneered. "Dumbledore, I should have known."

"You risked a lot coming here, Tom," Dumbledore replied calmly, his blue eyes blazing in a look that finally explained to Harry why Dumbledore was the wizard that Voldemort most feared.

"Yes. Avada Kedavra!"

Dumbledore disappeared in a swirl of white mist and appeared behind him before using his wand to make the other statues come to life. The statue of the witch grabbed Bellatrix from behind and pinned her down to the ground to prevent her from escaping or attacking. The centaur hurried towards Voldemort at full speed but Voldemort merely vanished and appeared somewhere else. The house elf and the goblin made a beeline for the fireplace as the statue of the wizard locked its grasp tighter around Harry.

Voldemort sent the killing curse hurtling at Dumbledore once more but he deflected it with a large spell that caused Voldemort to put up a huge silver shield for protection.

"I know that you're not going to kill me, Dumbledore." Voldemort replied.

Dumbledore shrugged. "There are many worse things than death, Tom. And there are many different ways of destroying a man. I admit, I don't think killing you would quite satisfy me."

"There's nothing worse than death!" Voldemort declared, sending the killing curse in his direction once more.

The statue of the centaur dived in front of the spell, breaking into thousands of pieces from the force of it. Voldemort sent the spell again and this time it was the house elf that blocked it. The third time, Dumbledore was protected by the goblin.

Voldemort sneered. "You're out of luck, Dumbledore." He raised his wand and sent the deadly green light in Dumbledore's direction again.

Dumbledore conjured what looked like a long thin flame from his wand that wrapped itself tightly around Voldemort, shield and all and stopped the curse from continuing in his direction. Voldemort transformed into a snake and vanished in a mist, reappearing on the other side of the destroyed fountain sending a jet of green light the moment he appeared.

This time, Dumbledore wasn't in time to deflect it and Harry cried out a warning. But then a beautiful song filled the Atrium air and Fawkes dived forward, opening his mouth to devour the spell and falling to the ground in a pile of ashes. Dumbledore used his wand to make the water in the fountain rise up and cover Voldemort like he was in a cocoon of molten glass. Voldemort disappeared from under the water and there was silence.

Dumbledore looked around, a worried look on his face. "Stay where you are, Harry." He replied, looking frightened.

Harry nodded and then he felt like his head had split open. His scar was burning a hole in his head the pain was so intense. He suddenly felt like he was fused together with an evil creature that had burning red eyes. He couldn't even groan when the creature used his voice to speak.

*"Kill me now, Dumbledore. If death is nothing, then kill me right now."*

Dumbledore stared at Harry with fear in his eyes. Harry closed his own eyes, wishing for the pain to stop. He wanted to be himself again and he wanted to die. If he died then he could be with Sirius again but if he died, then he would never see Ginny again. Almost with the thought of Sirius and Ginny, Harry felt the invasion leave his body and the pain was gone. When he opened his eyes the Atrium was

filling up with people and Voldemort was gone.

Harry yelled a warning to Dumbledore as Madam Bones shot a spell at Williamson, the Auror who was trying to explain to her that Voldemort had just Disapparated with a woman. Dumbledore sent a curse at her and she crashed to the floor. Fudge appeared next to her and aimed his wand at Dumbledore's heart but Kingsley stepped up behind him and knocked his wand out his hand.

"What the bloody hell is going on?" Kingsley demanded. "Madam Bones and Fudge are on You-Know-Who's side?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, but I think we might have just figured out why the ministry has been refusing to believe that Voldemort is back." He sent a jet of yellow light at Fudge and his eyes clouded over before becoming extremely clear. Madam Bones was still unconscious. "Kingsley, I need some truth serum, I believe the ministry keeps some handy down in the courtroom?"

Kingsley nodded and hurried out of the room. Harry watched as James and Remus came into the Atrium carrying Moody who was bleeding badly from his head. On Dumbledore's orders they brought him straight to St. Mungo's. Tonks brought Neville, Luna, Ginny, Ron, and Hermione who were all bleeding, injured, and except for Neville, unconscious. Tonks transported them to St. Mungo's as well as Harry simply watched. He was still in a state of shock. His eyes stayed glued to the door of the lift, waiting for Sirius and Lexy to come. But there was nothing.

Kingsley returned and handed Dumbledore a bottle of the truth potion. Dumbledore poured it down Fudge's throat first.

"Cornelius, why did you attack me?" Dumbledore asked.

Fudge stared blankly ahead. "The voice in my head said to."

"Were you under the Imperius Curse?"

Fudge nodded. "I was."

“Do you know who placed the curse on you?”

“Madam Bones.”

Dumbledore nodded and told Kingsley to arrest Fudge for the time being until everything was properly straightened out and then he proceeded to give the potion to Amelia Bones. She sat up and also had the same blank look in her eyes as Fudge had.

“Amelia, why did you attack me?”

“I am not Amelia Bones,” Madam Bones replied. “I am Maria Lacroix, a loyal and faithful servant of the Dark Lord. It is my job to use Polyjuice Potion to impersonate Madam Bones until the Dark Lord makes his appearance. From there I am to receive further instruction.”

As if one cue, her Polyjuice Potion began to wear off. Madam Bones’ brown hair began to turn blonde and her glasses fell off as the form of Maria Lacroix took place.

Dumbledore nodded. “Where is Amelia Bones?”

“She is hidden in her basement. I am forced to keep her alive to use the potion but I have used the bare minimum of keeping her life sustained.” Maria replied.

Dumbledore gestured towards Williamson, the Auror that had arrived with Fudge to go rescue the real Madam Bones.

“What were your orders?”

“I was to be Minister of Magic, pretend that the Dark Lord had not returned and to turn a blind eye towards any signs that he was returned. I needed someone else to help me so I put the Imperius on Cornelius Fudge since he refused to believe logic anyway. He was a big help, though he had recently begun to fight me.”

Dumbledore nodded. “Kingsley, take care of Miss Lacroix and Fudge here. When Williamson returns have him bring Amelia to St. Mungo’s.



Also, I will be sending Dolores Umbridge here immediately as she no longer has grounds at Hogwarts.” He turned around to look at Harry now. “Harry, I know that we have a lot of important things to discuss. I have some things to take care of first, but I’ll meet you in my office.”

He handed Harry the statue of the wizard’s head after turning it into a portkey and as soon as Harry touched it he felt the familiar pull at his naval and he disappeared. He landed in the center of Dumbledore’s office. He stood up, dusting his hands off on his pants as he looked around. The portraits of the previous headmasters were all staring at him curiously. He closed his eyes, his lip quivering as he saw Sirius falling through the veil and Lexy diving in after him. It was all his fault. He had been so stupid. He knew from the beginning on some conscious level that that voice had been Voldemort and he knew that it was a trap but he had gone anyway. Because of his stupidity, the Order members had come to save him and because of his stupidity, Sirius and Lexy were killed.

“Did Dumbledore send you to give us a message?” The portrait of Phineas Nigellus asked, looking bored.

Harry shook his head no but he didn’t answer. He turned around and headed to the door but when he yanked on it, it was locked. He kicked it but that did nothing but make his foot hurt. He tried the Alohamora spell next but that didn’t work either. He cursed loudly and was lectured by one of the portraits for inappropriate language. Harry closed his eyes and breathed deeply, trying to control his anger. After everything that he had went through that night, he still didn’t know the truth.

Dumbledore knew and he had kept it from him. Voldemort obviously only knew part of it. The key was in the prophecy but it was long gone now. Harry began to pace up and down the office, wondering what that prophecy had contained. How had it concerned himself and did it answer his questions? Why had Voldemort wanted to kill him as a baby? He wasn’t sure how long he had spent pacing, his anger boiling and his grief for his godfather and his godfather’s girlfriend consuming him, but his thoughts were interrupted by Dumbledore coming through the fireplace with a baby Fawkes in his hands.

He placed the phoenix in his cage and took off his cloak before placing his wand on his desk. He turned to look at Harry then. "Well, I'm sure you'll be happy to know that Miss Weasley, Mr. Weasley, Miss Granger, Mr. Longbottom, and Miss Lovegood are all fine. They're currently being moved to the Hogwarts hospital wing and should only have to stay a few days. Moody will be alright as well. Tonks was injured, but she'll be fine. Remus is staying with his new wife in the hospital. James is on his way here."

As if on cue, Dumbledore's office door opened and James stepped in. He looked tired and defeated.

"James, have a seat."

James nodded. "Thanks."

Harry still hadn't spoken a single word. He looked at his father and then he looked at Dumbledore and he knew at that moment, that his father knew the answer to all of his questions as well. "I want to leave. Unlock the door."

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, Harry. The three of us need to talk."

Harry glared at him. "OH, NOW YOU WANT TO TALK! I FLOODED YOU ASKING YOU THE QUESTIONS THAT I WANTED TO KNOW! THE QUESTIONS THAT VOLDEMORT WAS SENDING THROUGH MY MIND BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT I WAS DESPERATE FOR THE ANSWERS! THE QUESTIONS THAT WOULD HAVE PREVENTED ME FROM WALKING INTO A TRAP THAT I KNEW ABOUT FROM THE BEGINNING! THE TRAP THAT I LED MY FRIENDS INTO BECAUSE THEY WERE TOO STUBBORN TO STAY HERE! THE TRAP THAT CAUSED SIRIUS AND LEXY TO DIE!"

Dumbledore nodded. "It's good to feel pain, Harry, it only shows that you're human."

"YEAH, WELL MAYBE I DON'T WANT TO BE HUMAN!"

James turned to him now. "You don't mean that, Harry, and I want you to calm down. You don't have any right to talk to Dumbledore like that."

Dumbledore held up his hand to stop James. "No, James, he does. He has more of a right. Harry, I don't think that you should be yelling at me just now because if you're going to yell then you should at least know everything. You're not nearly as angry at me as you should be."

"Or at me," James replied.

Harry glared at both of them. "You both know the truth and I know it. Explain."

Dumbledore nodded. "It's my fault that Sirius and Alexis died tonight. I refused to tell you the answers when you asked and I had decided that you were much too young and James agreed with me. And I didn't have any plans of telling you in the near future but now you obviously need to know."

"What do you mean that it was your fault about Sirius and Lexy?"

Dumbledore sighed. "If I had told you what you wanted to know earlier you never would have run into that trap desperately searching for answers. I know it now and I regret my decision. I made a mistake, Harry, because I wanted to see you happy. I put your happiness and my concern for your well-being ahead of what was right."

James nodded. "As did I. I almost told you this past summer when I told you about the elementals but I just couldn't bring myself to do it. You were so happy and I just couldn't ruin it. I justified to myself that it wasn't time and that I had lots of time to tell you and Dumbledore agreed with me."

Harry glared at both of them. "AND NEITHER OF YOU THOUGHT OF EVEN ASKING ME WHAT I THOUGHT? I DESERVE TO KNOW! I MAY ONLY BE FIFTEEN BUT I'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT AND I THINK THAT I CAN HANDLE PRETTY MUCH ANYTHING THAT COMES MY WAY! NOW I WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH! WHAT WAS IN THAT PROPHECY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF

## MYSTERIES? WHY DID VOLDEMORT WANT TO KILL ME AS A BABY? THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT?"

James looked at Dumbledore and Dumbledore sighed. "Let me begin. Let's start with your scar, Harry. You know by now that your scar connects you to Voldemort and that you sometimes can read or understand his emotions, especially when he is feeling them very strongly. You also discovered that he can use your mind to communicate with you the way he did by telling you to go to the Department of Mysteries. He needed you to touch that prophecy. You see, when a prophecy is made only the people about who it is made can be the ones to touch it. Meaning that either you or Voldemort had to take it from the shelf and Voldemort had no plans of walking into the Ministry of Magic on his own. At Christmas, when you informed us of the attack on Arthur Weasley, I thought I saw a stirring of Voldemort behind your eyes. I knew that he was getting stronger and I knew at that moment that we needed to stop it. So I thought of Occulmency. Severus and I are the only ones capable of teaching you and I did not want to do it for fear of Voldemort spying on me. I wanted him to see that our only relationship was that of a teacher and his student and I did not want him to see that I was giving you special treatment. By keeping you further away from me I thought that it was safer for you in the long run. I was protecting you from Voldemort and therefore in a way, yourself. So I asked Severus to teach you. He was not thrilled with the request but he agreed to do it."

"YEAH, BUT HE SURE AS HELL DIDN'T TEACH ME RIGHT! HE DIDN'T EVEN TELL ME HOW TO BLOCK MY MIND AT FIRST!" Harry exclaimed. "DA AND I HAD TO RESEARCH OCCULMENCY AND I HAD TO FIGURE OUT ON MY OWN WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE DOING!"

Dumbledore nodded. "I know, Harry, but it worked out. I think that the frustrations the two of you shared benefited your learning and in the end you did manage to master Occulmency. I've been pushing into your mind all evening and you've kept me out, probably self-consciously too am I right?" Harry looked surprised at this statement and merely nodded when he realized that he hadn't even noticed Dumbledore had been trying to get into his mind. "Severus also did understand you're meaning after we spoke and when you didn't come

back from the forest he alerted Order members and it was thought that you had gone to the Ministry.”

James nodded. “We got ready to go almost immediately and when we arrived we were all impressed with how well the six of you had done.”

“Yes. James and I agreed that you were too young to know the truth, Harry, and too young to take on such a huge responsibility. But then in your first year you stopped Quirrell from getting the Philosopher’s Stone for Voldemort but eleven was so young and while you were unconscious James and I agreed that it wasn’t the time. Then in your second year you rescued Miss Weasley from the Chamber of Secrets. Again, we talked about your scar but this time you didn’t ask any questions about why you and why Voldemort so I left it alone, as did James. Then in your third you I watched you save and get Sirius back. Both you and James were so happy but it was then that I began to wonder. You were thirteen and you had accomplished so much, but really you were still so young. Then at fourteen you were forced into the Tri-Wizard Tournament and at the end of the year you watched Voldemort rise again. But you were so tired and you were in shock over what had happened. We put it off yet again. I told James that if he thought the opportunity arose over the summer to tell you then maybe we should consider it. But James decided you were still much too young. But now, Harry, now the time has arrived and we cannot put this off much longer. It is time that you knew everything.”  
Dumbledore explained.

James nodded. “And remember that we kept this from you because we thought it was in your best interest and for your own safety. And we didn’t want to burden you.”

Dumbledore sighed. “So about everything, let’s start from the beginning. Sixteen years ago I was at the Hog’s Head pub interviewing Sybil Trelawney for the post of Divination professor. She was not what I was looking for, but as I got up to leave she made a very real prophecy. This prophecy was over heard by a Death Eater and Voldemort only learned of half of it. Voldemort wanted the prophecy tonight because he wanted to know the rest of it. He wanted to know everything and to see where he went wrong.”

"The prophecy's broken. It fell out of Neville's robes and smashed."  
Harry replied simply.

Dumbledore nodded. "It did, but I heard the real one. That was merely a copy. Sixteen years ago, I called James and Lily into my office to tell them about this prophecy."

James nodded. "He let us listen to it and then he told us that we couldn't fight it and that we had to go into hiding immediately. Lily was eight months pregnant with you. We were terrified."

Harry gulped. "What did the prophecy say? Why does Voldemort want to kill me?"

Dumbledore brought his pensive over to his desk and sat it down before he pulled a strand of silvery substance from his mind and dropped it into the basin. "I think it's time that you heard the prophecy, Harry."

A younger version of Professor Trelawney rose from the basin, her frilly shawls and big glasses shining in the shadowy substance that she was and as she spoke it sent chills down Harry's spine.

*"The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches. Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies. And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives. The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies."*

The shadow died away and Harry gulped. "So what does that mean?"

Dumbledore sighed. "It means that a child born in July fifteen years ago is the only chance of ever destroying Voldemort."

"Meaning me?"

"That's the interesting part. It doesn't necessarily mean you."

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Harry asked.

James sighed. “Harry, when’s Neville’s birthday?”

“July – oh, but then why did Voldemort come after me?”

“That’s the question, isn’t it? He must have seen something in you that worried him. You’re both half-bloods. Think about that. He didn’t go after the pureblood thinking that he would destroy him one day but he went after the half-blood like himself.” Dumbledore explained. “You defeated him with the help of your mother’s love and you’ve escaped him four times since.”

“But what kind of power do I have that Voldemort doesn’t? Da has the elemental powers too so why couldn’t he defeat him?” Harry asked.

James shook his head. “But you’re more powerful than I am in that sense, Harry.”

“It’s not the elementals, it’s love.”

“Love?” James and Harry both asked.

Dumbledore nodded. “The ability to love. It’s something that Voldemort is not capable of. He is completely without emotion other than anger and hate. You have the power to love and can wield that over him. There’s a room in the Department of Mysteries that is kept locked at all times. It contains a force more powerful than death, than human intelligence, than the forces of nature. It is also the most mysterious and most unexplainable. You possess that power, Harry. That power is love. Love conquers all. The power to love saved you from Voldemort’s possession earlier.

“Possession?” James asked, paling. “When was he possessed?”

Dumbledore and Harry both ignored him. “So that’s my power, I can love?”

Dumbledore nodded. “Yes.”

“And the end of the prophecy, what did that mean? *Neither can live while the other survives?*”

“It means that your life will either include or end in murder. You must kill Voldemort Harry, it is your destiny, or he will kill you.” Dumbledore explained.

Harry could only nod and without another glance he walked out of the room.

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Harry refused to talk to his father in the next few days. He locked his mirror in the trunk so that he didn't have to feel it warming up in his pocket. He didn't speak to Dumbledore either. He sent back all the post he got from Potter Manor without reading it. He was pretty quiet and he didn't say much to Ginny or his friends. He was glad to learn that they were alright. Ron had some light scars on his arms from the brains that had attacked him but everyone else was doing well.

The *Daily Prophet* finally announced the return of Lord Voldemort and explained to the wizarding community that Madam Bones had been kidnapped and impersonated by Polyjuice Potion and had placed the Imperius Curse on Fudge. Fudge was forced into early retirement and Madam Bones sadly passed away in the hospital from her injuries. They would be voting for a new Minister of Magic within the next few weeks. For the time being, Rufus Scrimgeour, the new Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement Unit had taken over as Minister of Magic until someone new could be elected. The *Daily Prophet* also explained that there had been a mass revolt of the Dementors of Azkaban and that they had gone to join Voldemort. Dumbledore was reinstated as the Headmaster and as a member of the International Confederation of Wizards and chief warlock of the Wizengamot.

The article about Harry that Rita Skeeter wrote appeared in the *Daily Prophet* as well. Mr. Lovegood had sold it and it was now being constantly re-printed. Harry was viewed as a hero to the wizarding world once more. Umbridge had been sacked. Dumbledore had rescued her from the Forbidden Forest. No one was sure how he had



done it but she was resting in the hospital wing before she faced trial for her crimes. Mainly her crimes were for the blood quill, the threat of using the Cruciatus Curse, and for trying to use truth potion on students, namely Harry. She would be going to prison for a long time.

Flitwick got rid of Fred and George's swamp in less than a minute but he left a small section roped off under the window as a tribute to their excellent masterpiece. A small plaque was erected with their name there as a tribute to them.

Harry, Ginny, Neville, Hermione, Ron, and Luna were all awarded fifty points each for their bravery in the Department of Mysteries by Professor McGonagall. She had returned from St. Mungo's walking with a cane but she seemed to be much better. Hagrid returned to the castle as well and mentioned to Harry that he was planning on finding a lady-friend for Grawp.

Harry felt lost those last few weeks of school. He didn't want to talk to anyone and he spent most of his time wandering around alone. He ignored Ginny and his friends and he knew that they were only going to let him mope for so long before they came back strong. He was walking through the school grounds the night before he returned home, lost in thought and thinking about Sirius when a warm hand grabbed his shoulder. He whipped around, his wand at the ready and emotion swelled within him when he saw who was there and for the first time since everything had happened he burst into tears.

Warm arms encircled him and held him close as he sobbed.

"Shh, Harry, don't cry. It's alright. It was all a misunderstanding."

"I'd say so," Lexy replied as she took Sirius' hand in hers as he held Harry tighter.

"I don't understand," Harry sobbed. "How are you here?"

Sirius grinned. "You didn't think I'd die that easily, did you?"

Harry laughed for the first time in weeks. "What happened?"

Sirius grinned as he used his thumbs to wipe Harry's tears. "Well, I was hit with a curse from my dear cousin Bella and I stumbled back and fell through the Veil of Death and I saw Lexy dive in my direction. She grabbed me as I fell and we landed just behind the curtain on the tiny landing. We never actually fell through the veil."

Lexy nodded. "But we were knocked unconscious for almost five days. Time flows differently there so it was only a few hours there but it was almost five days in the real world. The curse that hit my leg was bad and had ripped most of it open. Sirius was injured just as badly. But I managed to wake him up and we carefully stumbled off the edge and back through the curtain."

"If we had fallen off that edge we would be gone. We were lucky that we didn't fall farther. Lexy saved my life by grabbing me the way she did. It stopped my fall and when she fell on top of me it prevented me from moving farther and falling off the edge." Sirius explained.

Harry wiped the tears from his eyes as he looked up at them. "But, it's been two weeks. Where have you guys been?"

"Well, when we got out it took us a day to find our way out of the Department. By then it was night time. We went straight to St. Mungo's. Both of us were so out of it and we didn't even think of contacting anyone until we were healed. We spent three days at St. Mungo's after that." Sirius replied.

Lexy nodded. "Then I contacted my parents and Sirius contacted Remus, James, and Tonks. From there they contacted Dumbledore."

"Yeah and I've been trying to get a hold of you for the last four days but you don't answer your mirror and you send your letters back unopened. You brat!"

Harry grinned. "I thought that it was Da."

Sirius nodded. "You need to talk to him, Harry. James is a wreck. He's so worried about you. He had his reasons for not telling you about the prophecy."

“You knew?” Harry asked angrily.

Sirius shook his head. “No I didn’t. James and Lily never told Remus and I about the prophecy. When they went into hiding they said that it was because recent news had come about that said that Voldemort wanted to kill them not you. That was all we knew. James told me everything when I appeared at Potter Manor with Lexy.”

Harry nodded. “How could he keep something like this from me? And Dumbledore? He knew all this time and I don’t know which one of them was telling who not to tell me, but me being too young is not an answer! This was important!”

Sirius nodded. “You’re right, Harry, this was important and now you know. It’s not the time to dwell on the past. Come on, why don’t you head inside, talk to your friends? They’re worried about you. You can tell them that I’m still alive and kicking.”

Harry smirked. “Yeah.” He hugged Sirius close again, not caring who was around to see. “I’m so glad that you’re here.”

Sirius hugged him back and ruffled his hair. “Me too, bud, me too.”

Lexy smiled at them. “Well, I have a few things to take care of with Dumbledore so I’ll leave you two. I’ll probably see you over the summer Harry. Bye Sirius.”

They watched her go and Sirius sighed. “She saved my life.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I guess she did. She’s pretty amazing, Sirius.”

Sirius grinned. “Guess she is.” He draped his arm around Harry’s shoulders. “Well, let’s head up to the school. We’ve got some packing to do and you’re going to talk to James when you get home. I’ll allow you one hour of moping and then you’re talking to your father.”

Harry sighed. “I guess I can handle that.”

Sirius grinned. “Good. So, fancy a trip down to the kitchens on the way. I’m starving!”

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Later on that evening, Sirius lay in bed next to Lexy in her chambers at Hogwarts. She was sitting next to him flipping through her schedule book wearing a short blue satin nightgown made of lace and that made Sirius' mouth water. Sirius stretched lazily, comfortable in his nakedness as he twirled a red rose that he had grabbed from her nightstand between his fingers.

"Hey Lex?"

"Hmm?" Lexy asked as she carefully marked off a few things in the book.

He took up his courage and just blurted out what he wanted to say. He was an unconventional sort of guy after all. "I love you."

She turned to look over at him in surprise. "You – really?"

He nodded, reaching over to take her hand in his. He closed her book and tossed it over onto the night stand to pull her close. "I don't think I realized that I was in love with you until it hit me that I almost lost you in the Department of Mysteries. We almost died. You saved my life and it was that moment when you shook me awake and looked down at me from that spot on the ledge that I realized that I'm crazy in love with you. I've been an idiot for denying it all these weeks or months or whatever. I love you."

Lexy smiled, her green eyes twinkling in happiness. "Yeah, well, I love you too."

Sirius grinned, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively. "Really?"

She nodded. "I didn't want to, but you were so ..."

"Sweet?"

"Persistent."

He laughed. "And you loved every second of it."

"Prat," she murmured.

He laughed again and brought her hand to his lips. "Hey Lex, wanna get married?"

"Are you serious?"

"Yup and you're Lexy, your point being?"

She grinned. "Ha-ha very funny. You really want to get married?"

He nodded. "Hell, I guess I do. Never thought that would happen. Wanna get married?"

She grinned. "Kay." She leaned down to kiss him softly. "I love you, Sirius."

Sirius smiled up at her. "Hmm, love you too." He kissed her again, lingering for a few moments before he pulled back to tuck a strand of her hair behind her ear. "Guess I got to get you a ring."

She nodded. "Guess you do."

"Guess I got to actually get a job."

Lexy laughed. "Guess you do. Hey, with Umbitch gone, Dumbledore needs a new DADA teacher for next year?"

Sirius grinned. "Perfect." Then he silenced her with a kiss.

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## Chapter 47: Going Home

**Author's Notes:** please review!!

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## **Chapter XLVII – Going Home**

Harry still hadn't spoken to any of his friends and he knew that they still didn't know about Sirius and Lexy being alive still as the news had come after the leaving feast. He knew that he had to talk to them and that he had to apologize to them for leading them into danger. He wished that they would leave him alone and at the same time he wanted them nearby. He knew that they had given him two weeks and that on the train ride home they were going to talk to him. He didn't have a choice. He was actually surprised that Ginny had left him alone as long as she did. She was so amazing but she hadn't asked any questions. She'd kiss him hello and goodbye or goodnight or give him a hug in the hall but she never asked and he didn't know if he was grateful or disappointed.

He closed his trunk after one more brief glance around the room to make sure that he hadn't forgotten anything and then he locked Hedwig in her cage and lifted everything as he made his way downstairs. He placed his belongings in the entrance hall with everyone else's where it was to be brought down to the train when he heard a familiar voice call out his name and he stiffened.

"Harry, I need to talk to you for a moment," Dumbledore replied.

Harry turned to look at him. "I don't want to talk to you right now."

Dumbledore nodded. "I know that but I'm your headmaster and I'm not giving you a choice."

Harry sighed and followed Dumbledore into a nearby deserted classroom and closed the door. "What can I do for you, sir?"

"Better, Harry. I know that you're angry with me but it's nice to see that you can still be polite. I received a letter from James this morning."

"What was it about, sir?"

"You," Dumbledore replied. "He's worried about you. He assumes

that Sirius did speak with you last night yet you still refuse to have contact with him.”

“I promised Uncle Sirius that I’d talk with him when I get home not any sooner.”

Dumbledore nodded, his eyes sad. “Yes, Harry, but remember this. That prophecy ... I know that it’s a burden to have upon your shoulders and it was a burden that we desperately didn’t want you to carry at such a young age. James came to me for advice many times on whether to tell you about it or not but in the end he always decided that he couldn’t do it. He loves you, Harry, and he was so afraid of hurting you or making you hate him in the end. His worst fear is that he’ll fail you like he believes he failed Lily.”

Harry nodded. “I’ll talk to him, sir, I promise.”

Dumbledore smiled. “Good. You may leave now. Have a good summer, Harry.”

Harry nodded as he left the room and headed out towards the school carriages that would take him to the train station. He slid into the last carriage before it left the school, surprised to see Blaise Zabini and Daphne Greengrass snogging passionately. They didn’t even notice that he had stepped into the carriage. They arrived at the station and they looked up noticing Harry for the first time and Daphne blushed.

“Oh, er, hi Harry.”

He grinned. “Sorry to interrupt, but this was the last carriage. So Daphne, finally giving Zabini a chance, eh?”

She grinned and touched Blaise’s cheek adoringly. “Well, he is kind of cute.”

Harry laughed. “Have a good summer, guys.”

He stepped out of the carriage and headed up onto the train to find a compartment. He was one of the first students on the train. He made himself comfortable, stretching his long legs out on the bench and

leaning back against the window. He glanced at the doorway when he saw movement and gave Ginny a small smile. Then he pat his lap gently. She grinned and cuddled herself close to him. She kissed him softly but she didn't speak.

Finally, Harry broke the silence. "You haven't asked about anything?"

She nodded. "I know. Something huge happened and I understand that you needed time to yourself for a while. I didn't want to push. I just wanted you to know that I'm here. And ... I needed time to grieve too. I loved Sirius."

Harry nodded. "I know." He used his thumb to wipe the tears from her eyes. He smiled and buried his face in her hair, inhaling her scent. "I love you, Ginny, and I'm so glad that you're here." He sighed. "Something wonderful happened late last night."

"What?" She asked.

"Sirius and Lexy came to see me. They're both alive."

"What?" Ginny repeated, staring at Harry in surprise. "And you're just getting around to sharing this news! What is wrong with you?"

He laughed and kissed her nose. "Gin, it was late last night and I still didn't want to talk to anyone. But yeah, they're both alive." He quickly explained about how they had only landed on the ledge instead of falling through the veil and explained about how it took them so long to tell others.

Ginny grinned, tears rolling down her cheeks. "That's amazing and so wonderful! Oh I'm so glad that they're alive!" She hugged Harry tight, burying her face in his chest as she sobbed.

He nodded. "Me too. At first, I think that I was afraid that I was dreaming."

She smiled and snuggled closer into his chest. "I love you."

He smiled down at her. "I love you." He held her close for a few



minutes as she wiped tears of happiness from her eyes before he continued. "Something else happened, two huge things actually."

"What?"

"Voldemort possessed me."

"What? When? How? Why?" She asked fear in her voice.

Harry sighed. "During the battle between Voldemort and Dumbledore in the Atrium. Dumbledore wouldn't kill Voldemort he said something about death being nothing and that there were things worse than death. A little while later I felt this invasion on my body and my scar exploded in pain. It was the most painful thing that's ever happened to me. To have this evil being force himself into my body. He spoke from my lips, telling Dumbledore to kill me. He said that if death was nothing, then kill him now. I don't remember what happened exactly but I remember thinking that if he killed me then I could be with Uncle Sirius but I didn't want to die because I didn't want to be without you. Voldemort left my body after that. Dumbledore says the love in my heart was too strong for him to stay longer."

Ginny snuggled closer and kissed his Adam's apple. "Oh, honey, I'm so sorry that you had to go through that. It must have been horrible."

Harry placed his fingers on her chin and tilted her head upwards so that he could look into her eyes. "It made me love you more. To think that you underwent possession by that creature for almost a year and at eleven years old. It's unbelievable. You're a truly powerful witch and I know that I couldn't have stood that much longer. I would have willingly died to make the pain stop. I don't know how you did it. But Merlin, I am so proud of you."

Tears welled up in the corner of her eyes. "I don't know how I did it either."

He pulled her closer, holding her in her arms as she shivered. He hadn't meant to dredge up old memories but he wanted her to understand. After a few minutes she was calm again.

"I'm sorry. I hate to cry."

He grinned as he kissed away her remaining tears. "So you've told me many times."

She laughed. "Harry, what was the other huge thing?"

"What?"

"You said that you had two other huge things happen to you other than Sirius' supposed death?"

He nodded. "Yeah ... I heard the prophecy."

"Prophecy?" Ron asked from the doorway where he stood with Hermione, Neville, and Luna. "Isn't that what we went to the ministry for?"

"But I dropped it, Harry. Remember how it shattered into a million pieces." Neville replied.

Harry nodded. "I know. Close the door guys."

Ron closed the compartment door and the four of them took seats. "Well, what's going on?"

Harry pulled Ginny closer as if he was desperate for the warmth. "The prophecy – my Da and Dumbledore have kept it from me all these years. The prophecy was made before I was born by Professor Trelawney and Dumbledore overheard it. He says that she's made a total of two real prophecies at least to his knowledge. It said that a child would be born in July to parents who had three times defied Voldemort and that child would have power that the Dark Lord knows not. It said that *either must die at the hand of the other because neither can live while the other survives.*"

Hermione gulped. "So you have to kill V-Voldemort in the end?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, according to the prophecy because if I don't, he's going to kill me."

“But how did he know it was you? There had to be other children who fit that time frame right?” Ginny asked.

Harry nodded. “There was. Neville.”

“W-w-what?” Neville stuttered.

“Dumbledore said that the prophecy could have applied to either me or you Nev, but it said that the Dark Lord would choose his equal and lucky me, I was the one chosen. Both of our parents had defied Voldemort three times and we were both born in July.” Harry explained. “But Voldemort chose me. Dumbledore says it’s because I’m a half-blood like him and he saw something in me that worried him. I just think it’s an unlucky piece of fate.”

Neville nodded. “I’m glad that it wasn’t me. I’m sorry, Harry.”

Harry shrugged. “No problem, I can’t say I blame you. I wish it wasn’t me.”

Hermione stood up. “Harry, Ron and I have to go do a few prefect duties but we’ll be back in a bit. Are you going to be alright?”

He held Ginny closer and nodded. “I think so.” He watched the two of them leave and then he turned to Neville, Luna, and Ginny. “I wanted to apologize to you guys for almost getting you all mmphf—”

He was cut off by Ginny’s lips. She tasted sweet and a little frustrated. The kiss ended much too soon for Harry’s liking.

“We don’t want a bloody apology, Harry. We followed you remember? We only have ourselves to blame.” Ginny replied.

Neville nodded. “Besides I’m glad that I went. It showed me what I’m going to be up against. People like that tortured my parents and I want to be able to fight back.”

Luna nodded. “Me too. It was an adventure of sorts. Besides, I knew that you would never let anything happen to us.”

Harry grinned. "Thanks, I think."

Ginny smiled. "OH! You two weren't here to hear the big news! And Ron and Hermione left too – but Sirius and Lexy are alive!"

Neville gave them a lopsided grin. "But I thought that they fell through that veil thingy."

"They did," Harry replied. "But they didn't actually fall through. When Lexy jumped forward to grab Uncle Sirius she prevented him from falling through and they landed on this ledge thing. Long story but time flows differently there and blah blah blah. But they're alive!"

Luna gave them a dreamy smile. "Good news it is then."

Harry grinned. "The best of." He smiled at Ginny, staring down at her pretty full lips. "Nev, Luna, no offence or anything but do you think that you could leave for a while?"

"Harry!" Ginny exclaimed, slapping his arm. "That's rude!"

Neville gave Harry a half-smirk, half-smile when he noticed the look on his friend's face. "Sure, be back in say, half an hour. Come on Luna, I want to show you something." Neville took her arm and led her out of the compartment before closing the door behind them.

Harry grinned. "Alone at last."

Ginny shook her head at him with a smile on her face. "You're horrible! Kicking them out of the compartment like that."

He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "But I had such a good reason."

Then he leaned down and gently captured her lips in his. She sighed in pleasure as she wrapped her arms around his neck and fisted her hands into his hair. He tasted wonderful. Happy and almost pleased with life, something she could say that he hadn't tasted like in weeks. His lips were soft and full and warm against hers as they touched. His

hands moved into her hair as he deepened the kiss and incredible sensations flew through her body. She felt like her body was on a slow-burn, starting from the inside and working its way out. It was amazing to think that he could make her feel like this with only his lips. His tongue brushed hers gently and she felt him pick her up and lay her back against the seat of the train before he placed his body over hers. She moaned and arched towards him when his lips left hers to trail down her throat.

She tasted like spring flowers and strawberries and he could never get over the scent. It drove him crazy at every opportunity and he wondered not for the first time if she did it to make him insane. But he knew that it was just her scent, something that she did strictly for herself. Making him crazy was probably just a side benefit. He nipped at her throat, planting small open mouthed kisses as low as the v-neck of her top allowed. Her hands were still fisted in his hair and she held tighter when his tongue darted gently beneath the v and over the swell of her breasts just above her bra.

“Harry,” she whispered in a half-moan, half-plea.

She dragged him upwards so that his lips were on hers again. He smelt like Harry. That amazing scent of sweat, sandalwood, and a light lemon that she knew was his shampoo. Her lips met his over and over and she hoped that he never stopped kissing her. He deepened the kiss again, letting his hands move down the sides of her body until he reached her waist and then he slid them up her top, running his calloused fingers along her ribcage and making her breath hitch.

“Ginny,” he murmured against her mouth before he turned his attention to her earlobe as his hands continued to roam over her skin.

He sucked gently on her earlobe before returning to her mouth to nibble gently on her bottom lip. Her hands had left his hair and were just beginning to roam under his tee shirt when the compartment door opened and a familiar drawl echoed throughout the compartment causing them to break apart.

“Well, well, well, look what I found,” Draco smirked. “I always

wondered what Potter saw in you, Weaselette, guess I just figured it out. I'd date you too if I had realized that you put out."

Harry had his wand pointed at Malfoy now and he was on his feet. "Get out!"

Malfoy smirked. "Or what? I was telling the truth."

"Why did you come in here? Did you want to thank me for getting your father arrested? I heard he's spending some time in Azkaban right now."

Malfoy paled slightly. "I should kill you for that, Potter. You have no idea what you've done."

Ginny was standing next to Harry now, her wand pointed at Malfoy as well. "How about you leave or I'll give you some more bat bogeys?"

Malfoy glared at both of them. "Because of you, bat bogeys are the least of my problems." He turned and stormed out of the compartment, slamming the door shut behind him.

Harry dragged his fingers through his hair in frustration. "Well, that was a pleasant visit."

Ginny sat cross-legged in the corner of the compartment. "He was just being a jerk, Harry."

He nodded. "I know." He sat down next to her and pulled her comfortably up into his lap. "Now, where were we?"

She laughed and slipped her hands under his tee-shirt and gently circled his belly button with her finger. "I believe that we were right about here."

His breath hitched as his stomach tied itself up in knots at her touch. "I think that you have a good memory, Miss Weasley."

"Mmm," Ginny murmured. "I have a perfect memory." Then she brought his lips down to hers.

\*\*\*\*\*

A little while later they were interrupted again by Neville and Luna returning, this time with Colin and Demelza as well. Ginny stayed comfortably on Harry's lap so that they all had room to sit.

"Well, you two look comfortable?" Colin replied with a grin.

Ginny laughed. "Very much so, thanks for asking."

Harry grinned as he kept his arms wrapped comfortably around her waist. Ginny's hands were wrapped over his and he liked the way that she felt.

Neville grinned at them. "So, did you two have a nice ... er, chat?"

Harry smirked. "Amazing, until Malfoy came in. But Gin threatened him with bat bogeys and he left."

Colin shuddered. "I don't blame him. Those are painful."

Ginny grinned. "Well, you never did that again, did you?"

Harry laughed. "You gave Colin bat bogeys? When? What did he do?"

Colin sighed. "It was in second year and it was when I was still all crazy and in awe of you and I kept bugging her to get your autograph and she finally just got so fed up she cursed me. I'll never forget it."

Demelza laughed. "I bet that would have been funny to see."

Ginny grinned. "It really was."

"Harry," Colin replied. "I just wanted to say that I was sorry about Sirius Black, Ginny told me that he was your godfather."

Harry grinned. "Yeah well it was all a misunderstanding and both Uncle Sirius and O'Bryan are alive."

"They never died?" Colin asked in surprise.

"Who never died?" Ron asked as he and Hermione came back into the compartment.

"Uncle Sirius and Lexy. I just found out last night."

"Why am I always the last to know these things?" Ron demanded.

"What happened?" Hermione asked.

Harry explained the story all over again and then grinned at his friends. "Uncle Sirius told me to tell you that he's still alive and kicking and he said that we can't get rid of him that easily."

Ginny smiled. "Of course not. Oh my God! Dee, did you see the new catalogue of *Witch Fashion* that Dana had this morning?"

Demelza nodded. "The one with that gorgeous gold dress? Yes!"

Ron rolled his eyes at Harry as Ginny and Demelza began to talk about clothes with Hermione and Luna occasionally joining in. "So, you three want to have a game of Exploding Snap?"

\*\*\*\*\*

When the train finally arrived at the station, Harry was worried to get off the train. He knew that he had to talk to his father, but he was so angry with him still. He wasn't sure if he even wanted to see him. He yanked his trunk down from the rack followed by Ginny's and handed her the cage with Midnight in it before he pulled Hedwig down. Ginny reached up to kiss him softly.

"I don't know how long it will be until I see you this summer but Mum sent notice that we're staying at the Burrow."

He nodded and pulled her closer for a longer kiss. "I love you."

She smiled. "I love you too. Will you write to me?"



He grinned. "Every day."

She kissed him again and then squeezed his hand gently. "Harry, you need to talk to James."

"I know." He pulled her close, wanting to only hold her for a moment longer. He inhaled her scent and then kissed her softly before pushing her away. "I'll see you later."

She nodded. "Yeah, come on."

They dragged their belongings off the train and Harry spotted Molly immediately with Fred, George, Bill, and surprisingly Charlie. Ginny let out a shriek of happiness and threw herself into Charlie's arms followed by Bill's and then Fred and George. The twins were wearing matching boots and jackets of dragon hide.

"Is that dragon hide?" Ron asked in astonishment.

Fred grinned. "Business is booming bro!"

George nodded. "We thought we'd treat ourselves as an award."

Harry let himself be hugged and kissed by Molly and he shook hands with the twins, Bill, and Charlie before he spotted James standing off to the side by himself. Harry said goodbye to them and hugged Hermione and Ginny goodbye before he headed into the direction of his father.

"Hi Harry."

"Hi, I'm ready to go."

James sighed and nodded. He picked up Harry's trunk and they walked over to one of his sports cars. James loaded the trunk with Harry's belongings and they let Hedwig out to fly home before Harry climbed into the passenger seat. James turned on the car and the first thing that Harry did was crank up the radio. He wasn't ready to speak to his father yet.

The stereo blasted out loud rock music as Harry stared out the window, watching the hills roll by. They finally pulled through the large gate and up to Potter Manor. Harry grabbed Hedwig's cage and went straight into the house and up to his room. He turned when he heard movement in his bedroom doorway and James levitated his trunk over to the end of his bed.

"Maddy says that dinner should be ready in about five minutes. I'll see you downstairs." James replied before he left the room. Harry felt a flash of guilt rip through him when he saw the sadness in his father's hazel eyes.

Harry headed down and into the kitchen and found only Maddy in there. "Hi Maddy."

She smiled. "Hello Harry, how is you doing this evening?"

"Alright I guess. Where's Uncle Remus and Uncle Sirius?"

"Remus and Tonks moved out, sir, just last week. They bought a house a few blocks away. Sirius is still out with Miss O'Bryan, I believe."

Harry nodded. He had forgotten that Remus and Tonks wouldn't be living there anymore and he was dreading a dinner with only James as his company as he had a feeling that the house elves were going to conveniently disappear. He took a seat at the table but he didn't look up when his father walked in. Maddy and Mickey did disappear and they ate in silence. Finally after about ten minutes, James spoke up.

"Harry, listen, I know that you're angry with me and I don't blame you for that. You have every right to be. But you have to talk to me sometime."

"Better later then sooner." Harry replied.

James slammed his water goblet onto the table. "Okay, I've had enough! You refused to have contact with me for the last two weeks.

You wouldn't answer your mirror! You sent letters back unopened! And now you're just being a spoiled little brat! I did what I thought was best for you and for everyone else! For Merlin's sake, Harry, you're only fifteen years old! Did you think that I wanted to burden you with such a thing?"

"IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU WANTED TO OR NOT!" Harry exploded. "THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT I DESERVED TO KNOW! I MAY ONLY BE FIFTEEN BUT I'VE COME FACE TO FACE WITH VOLDEMORT FIVE TIMES NOW! FOUR IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS! I'VE ALWAYS WONDERED WHY ME? WHY DID HE WANT TO KILL ME ABOVE ANYONE ELSE? IT NEVER MADE SENSE! AND WHY GO AFTER ME WHEN I WAS A BABY? BUT NO ONE EVER TOLD ME! YOU NEVER HAD THE ANSWERS AND I JUST ASSUMED THAT IT WAS BECAUSE YOU YOURSELF DIDN'T UNDERSTAND! OH HOW WRONG WAS I? YOU KNEW THE ENTIRE TIME BUT YOU NEVER SAID ANYTHING! YOU WATCHED ME IN THE HOSPITAL WING WHEN I WAS ELEVEN YEARS OLD ASKING YOU AND DUMBLEDORE ABOUT VOLDEMORT AND AS I EXPLAINED TO YOU WHAT I HAD GONE THROUGH DOWN IN THAT TRAPDOOR! THEN YOU WERE THERE AGAIN AS I TOLD DUMBLEDORE THAT I SAVED GINNY FROM A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD VOLDEMORT AND FROM A GIANT BASILISK! BUT DID YOU TELL ME THEN, NO! THEN IN MY THIRD YEAR I LEARNT THE TRUTH ABOUT UNCLE SIRIUS AND HELPED YOU UNDERSTAND THAT HE HADN'T BETRAYED YOU! BUT AGAIN I GOT NOTHING! THEN IN MY FORTH YEAR I WATCHED VOLDEMORT COME BACK INTO HIS BODY! IF THERE WAS EVER A TIME THAT I DESERVED TO KNOW THE TRUTH IT WAS THEN! THIS YEAR I GOT EXCUSE AFTER EXCUSE ABOUT WHY I HAD TO LEARN OCCULMENCY ABOUT HOW IT WAS SO IMPORTANT FOR ME TO BLOCK MY MIND FROM VOLEMORT AND WE TOUCHED A BIT MORE UPON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO OF US BUT NO ONE ANSWERED MY QUESTIONS! THEN I STARTED HEARING THIS VOICE IN MY HEAD AND ON SOME LEVEL I KNEW THAT IT WAS VOLDEMORT! HE TOLD ME THAT I COULD FIND THE TRUTH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MYSTERIES! I WENT TO DUMBLEDORE THROUGH THE FLOO NETWORK AND I DEMANDED ANSWERS THAT HE REFUSED TO GIVE ME AND IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT

THAT I REALIZED IF I WANTED TO KNOW ANYTHING THAT I HAD TO WALK INTO A TRAP AND I ACCEPTED THAT! SO I WENT! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE TO REALIZE THAT YOU AND DUMBLEDORE HAVE KNOWN THE ANSWERS THIS ENTIRE TIME BUT SIMPLY REFUSED TO TELL ME! YOU'RE RIGHT I HAVE BEEN A BRAT AND I DON'T BLOODY CARE! AS OF THIS MOMENT, I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU EVER AGAIN!"

He stood up and was half-way down the hall when James grabbed his arm and whipped him around to face him. "DON'T YOU TALK TO ME LIKE THAT! I'M YOUR FATHER! AND OKAY SO I MADE A MISTAKE IN KEEPING THIS FROM YOU, HARRY, BUT I DID WHAT I THOUGHT WAS BEST! YOU'LL UNDERSTAND THAT WHEN YOU HAVE KIDS OF YOUR OWN ONE DAY! I'M TIRED OF YOUR ATTITUDE AND OF YOUR TEMPER AND MERLIN HELP ME THAT YOU'VE MANAGED TO INHERIT YOUR MOTHER'S TEMPER! I MADE A MISTAKE! I SEE THAT NOW! BUT NOW YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON! AND NOW YOU UNDERSTAND WHY VOLDEMORT WANTS TO KILL YOU AND WILL CONTINUE TO TRY! YOU NEED ME! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE A LOT TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR? WE'VE MERELY STARTED THE MAGIC THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO LEARN! DUMBLEDORE SAYS LOVE WILL HELP YOU DEFEAT VOLDEMORT AT THE END BUT WHAT ABOUT UNTIL THEN? HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF THAT? HAVE YOU EVEN THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT COULD HAPPEN AT THE END, HARRY? HE COULD KILL YOU!" Harry watched as the last few words of what James had said seemed to come to him and he blinked back tears. "HE COULD BLOODY KILL YOU! HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF WHAT THAT WOULD DO TO ME? YOU'RE ALL I'VE GOT!"

Harry closed his eyes for a moment and when he spoke his voice was very calm but very cold. "Yeah he could kill me or I'll murder him. I understand what I have to do and I don't like it. But I've been through a lot already. Voldemort possessed me at the ministry, demanded of Dumbledore to kill him while he was in my body. I survived that. I survived the Cruciatus Curse three times by him. I underwent the Imperius and through a twist of fate I've dodged the Avada Kedavra three times in my life. I may not know what I'm going

to do or how I'm going to do it, but I'll work on it. I may never be ready to face Voldemort, but I'll do it. I may only be fifteen years old, but I'm more of an adult than most people my age. And I may be all you've got, but you just lost a big part of my trust and I don't know if you can ever gain it back."

Then he turned around and walked up the stairs without another word as James watched him go, tears in his eyes and his heart in pain.

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## **Chapter 48: Amends and a Wedding**

**Author's Notes:** please review!

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### **Chapter XLVIII – Amends and a Wedding**

Harry and James avoided each other the next few days. Harry spent all of his time in his room, refusing to come out. Maddy brought him up trays of food at meal times and he ignored his father when he knocked on the door. He spent his time going through the books that he had and teaching himself how to do defensive spells wandless. He had mastered almost twenty spells in the three days that he had spent in his room. He anxiously awaited the letters from Ginny, clinging to them as his only light of happiness as his stubborn nature kept him from speaking to anyone in the house.

James was at a complete loss for what to do. He kept replaying their argument over and over in his mind, wondering how he could have changed the outcome but knowing that there was no possible way. Harry had every right to be angry at him and that's what made him ache more. He felt like a piece of his heart had been ripped out and stomped on. He had become a wreck. After two days of no Harry, he had cracked open a bottle of Firewhiskey. Maddy had thrown a fit when she had found him passed out in the living room with half of the bottle gone. He had deeply regretted his decision when he had woken up the next morning with the mother of all hangovers, not that

it had stopped him from drinking of course.

And to his dismay, Maddy had called in the Marauders.

James had been trying not to bother them. Remus was happily married now and Sirius was still spending a lot of time with Lexy and he didn't want to bother them with his problems. But he should have known that they would come. They were his best mates and they loved Harry just as much as he did. All he could do was a lift a hand when Remus and Sirius came into the living room and found him sitting on the couch. His hair was messier than usual and his clothes were wrinkled and looked slept-in, which they were. He looked and felt like crap and he didn't care. He hadn't even gone to work in the last three days and had even stopped going to his usual daily stop. It had been one week since Harry had come home and he still hadn't spoken to him since that night at dinner.

"Prongs, what the hell are you doing to yourself?" Sirius demanded as he ripped the glass of Firewhiskey from his friend's hand.

"I'm drowning my problems, what does it bloody look like! Give that back!" He slurred as he reached for it.

Sirius kept the glass out of his reach and signalled to Remus. Together the two of them picked him up and dragged him upstairs to his bedroom. Then they threw him fully dressed into an ice-cold shower.

"BLOODY HELL!" James yelled when the water hit him.

"Feel any better?" Remus asked in a bored voice.

"Certainly smell better, anyway," Sirius replied.

Remus closed the shower stall door. "Take a long shower, James, clean up. Then we'll talk."

"I don't want to bloody talk!" James muttered.

"Too bad."

Remus and Sirius went into the bedroom to wait for him and ten minutes later James came out with a towel wrapped around his waist. His eyes still looked a bit bloodshot but he looked ten times better.

“Get dressed and meet us in the living room.” Sirius replied before he led Remus out of the room.

James came down five minutes later, glaring at them as he plopped himself down into a chair. “I can bloody well take care of myself.”

Sirius smirked. “Sure showed me. What the hell’s your problem, James? Sitting on your arse drinking Firewhiskey sure as hell isn’t going to help your problem?”

James shrugged. “No, but it makes the pain go away.”

Remus sighed. “James, what happened? I haven’t heard from you or Harry since he came home from school. Did you talk?”

James snorted. “Talk, more like yelled. He hates me. Says he never wants to talk to me again! He’s been up in his room for the last three days. He won’t even come down for meals.”

“So you had an argument? Get over it.” Sirius replied.

“Excuse me?”

“You heard me! James, it’s only natural! You and Harry have had a great relationship. This is the first year that you’ve really argued about anything. He’s a teenager, arguments with his parents are natural!”

Remus nodded. “And of course he’s going to be angry with you. This is a big thing James, bigger than kids his age have to go through. It’s the ultimate BFD and you can’t expect him to get over it just like that. He’s angry and he doesn’t want to talk to you for now but he’ll get over it. You’re his father. Didn’t you and Andrew ever argue and didn’t you ever tell him that you hated him and that you never wanted to talk to him again?”

James sighed as he dragged his fingers through his hair. "Well, yeah but this is different!"

"How is it different? You still needed time to yourself as did your Da and when the time was right you spoke and made up."

"But Harry said ... he said that he had lost his trust in me and that he didn't know if I could ever make it up again." James replied.

Sirius whistled. "Whoo, now that's a BFD!"

James groaned and buried his face in his hands. "I'm a horrible father! I should have bloody well told him last summer when I considered it! After all that stuff that I told him about the elementals! He deserved to know and I knew it! I just didn't want to hurt him and I knew the news would hurt him, maybe scare him a bit. Just like I'm not telling him about ... But Merlin, you two didn't see him. He was dead calm and what came out of his mouth was so mature and so adult. I felt like I was the kid and I was getting one hell of a tongue-lashing."

Remus nodded. "James, this is going to take a long time for you two to mend this. You'll have to move step by step and slowly build that trust again. It's not going to happen overnight. But you can't keep ignoring each other either or drowning your sorrows in alcohol. You need to pick up the lessons again. Harry needs to be prepared."

Sirius nodded. "I agree and starting the elemental lessons again will put the two of you back in constant contact and I think that's what you need to start mending this relationship. And you need one more thing that we've all overlooked."

"What's that?" James asked.

"Gorgeous."

"Ginny?" Remus asked and then he grinned. "Ah."

"What are you two on about?" James asked.



Sirius grinned. "Haven't you ever noticed how good she is for him, James? Gorgeous Ginny Weasley is his lifeline. Who is it that forced him to tell us about Umbitch and her blood quill? Who is it that has managed to knock some sense into Harry whenever he needed it this year? Who is it that he clings to at all opportunities? He needs her."

Remus nodded. "He needs her more than I think even he realizes. Send Molly an owl and ask if Ginny can come spend a day here. I think she's exactly what Harry needs and what you need to get the ball rolling in that direction."

James sighed. "Alright, let me just find some parchment."

\*\*\*\*\*

Ginny arrived by Floo at Potter Manor the next morning. She had agreed with James and not told Harry in her evening letter that she was coming over. She stepped into the entrance hall and smiled warmly at James.

"Hi James."

He smiled. "Ginny, thanks for coming."

She nodded. "No problem. Where's Harry?"

"He's in his room. Ginny, before you go up there – he's really angry at me and I'm going to try to mend fences with him but the first thing that needs to be done is that we need to continue his elemental lessons. I'd really appreciate your help in helping me out here?" James explained.

Ginny nodded. "I'm firstly on Harry's side in this, not yours. But I do know that he needs you so I'll do what I can."

James grinned. "Thank you."

She smiled. "No problem. I'll go find Harry now."

Ginny was half-way up the stairs when she ran into Sirius. "Hey!" She

grinned and threw herself into his arms for a warm hug.

"Hey Gorgeous! You didn't really think that I'd gone and died on you, did you?"

She nodded and kissed his cheek. "I forgot that you were invincible."

He laughed. "Of course. It was my idea for you to come here and knock some sense into the prat. Moony and I found James drowning his sorrows in a bottle of Firewhiskey. It's a desperate situation."

"And you think that I can fix it?"

Sirius nodded. "Gorgeous, you're his lifeline and personally I just wanted to see you again."

She grinned. "I'll see what I can do. I told James that I'm on Harry's side for this. He should have known about this prophecy."

"I know. I didn't even know and since this is the second secret that's come out from James it makes me wonder if he's hiding anything else from us."

She hugged him again. "I'm glad that you're alright."

He grinned. "Well, me too, Gin, I didn't really want to die." He kissed her forehead. "Now you go in there and smarten the git up. He can't avoid his father forever."

Ginny nodded. "Alright. I'll talk to you later."

She smiled warmly at him and squeezed his hand gently before she made her way upstairs and knocked gently on Harry's bedroom door. There was no answer so she tried the knob and found it locked. She shrugged and pulled out her hair pin, glad that Fred and George had taught her this particular trick. She shimmed it into the lock and it clicked open. She put the pin back into her hair and opened the door.

"I had that locked for a reason. Get out!" Harry replied coldly.

Ginny closed the door behind her and walked over to where Harry was lying on his bed and staring up at the ceiling. She climbed into the bed next to him and wrapped her arms around him, her head resting comfortably on his chest.

“Ginny?” He asked in surprise. “What are you doing here?”

She turned to look into his eyes and kissed him softly. “Visiting. And I think that you should be a lot nicer. Good thing that I learnt how to break and enter from the twins.”

Harry laughed and wrapped his arms around her. “I’m so glad that you’re here.”

They lay like that, holding each other close for a few minutes before Ginny spoke up. “James told me what happened.” Harry stiffened and tried to move away but Ginny held on tighter. “Harry, you have to talk to him.”

“I did and now I’ve got nothing else to say to him.”

“Oh, that’s real mature, Harry! You need him! Now that you know the truth you need to start preparing yourself! You need to work on your elementals and to continue to learn magic and you need James to help you! You can’t ignore him forever!” Ginny exclaimed.

“I know that. But right now it’s working just fine for me.”

“You’re a prat, you know that! You can’t brood about what happened or push everyone that cares about you out of your life! There are more important things that you should be doing! You should be making amends with your father! So he didn’t tell you about the prophecy, Harry? Get over it! You know now and being upset about what didn’t happen isn’t going to change anything! Forget the past and look into the future! You need to prepare yourself for Voldemort! He’s going to keep coming after you! You need to be ready and for that you need James.”

Harry was quiet for a few minutes. “I’m not a prat.”

Ginny laughed. "Harry!"

He sighed. "Alright, I know that you're right! It's just ... he kept this from me my whole life. Dumbledore's one thing but he's not my father! How am I ever supposed to trust him again?"

Ginny kissed his cheek. "Because you love him and because he loves you. You're his only real family and he's all you have. He did what he thought was best and nothing is ever going to change his decision. But now you know and now you need to think about it and to speak to him and to get over your anger or at least push it aside. You need to forgive him and you need to start making amends in your relationship. That relationship may be a little strained for a while but that strain is going to turn into a gap and that gap into an enormous hole that's not going to ever get fixed. Do you understand?"

Harry nodded. "How did you get so wise?"

She snuggled closer. "I don't know. I guess I'm just special like that."

He sat up, leaning back against his head board and pulling Ginny up into his lap. "Will you come with me when I talk to him?"

She nodded. "Of course." She kissed him softly. "Let's go."

She stood up and held out her hand to him. Harry took it in his and allowed her to pull him to his feet.

"Gin? Before we go down, I just want to shower and get dressed and ... think."

She nodded. "Alright, I'll wait for you here."

Harry grabbed some clothes to change into and headed into the adjoining bathroom and closed the door. He quickly showered and dressed and brushed his teeth before he went back into his bedroom. Ginny was sitting on his bed, flipping through the pages of one his novels.

"Okay, I think I'm ready to go now." He took Ginny's hand in his and

they headed down the stairs. They found James sitting in the living room reading the newspaper. Harry stood in the doorway and just stared at his father. He had no idea what to say.

Ginny elbowed him and when he still didn't speak she sighed. "James?"

James turned around and stopped when he saw Harry. "Yeah?"

Harry still didn't speak so Ginny spoke again. "Harry has something that he'd like to say to you." Harry's mouth opened but nothing came out. "Harry!" Ginny hissed.

"Da," he murmured.

James stood up now and looked at his son from across the room. "Yes, Harry?"

"I – I want to start up my elemental lessons again. I need to prepare myself for Voldemort."

James nodded, his eyes sad. "Alright."

Harry winced, when Ginny stepped on his toe. "And ... and ... I'm sorry for how I acted the last time we talked. I had no right to speak to you like that."

"I accept. I'm sorry too, for not telling you about the prophecy and for anything else that I may have said or done in that argument."

Harry nodded. "Okay."

He turned to leave and stopped when James called out his name. "Harry! I love you."

Harry turned around to look at his father and nodded. "I love you too." Then he took Ginny's hand in his and walked out of the room.

Ginny stopped him in the hallway. "Was that really so hard?"

He nodded. "Incredibly. I still don't know if I can trust him, Gin."

"Of course you can trust him. You just have to build that trust up again is all. It's going to take time and hard work. But now you've both made the first step to making amends. That's the important thing." She replied.

"You've got a smart girl there, Harry," Sirius replied from behind them.

Harry grinned. "Yeah I know."

Sirius smiled. "Did you talk to James then?" When Harry nodded he grinned. "Good. He was wreck this last week but Moony and I managed to talk some sense into him. It's nice to know that Gorgeous here obviously managed the same with you. Why don't you two come on into the kitchen with us and eat some lunch? I've uh ... I've got something to tell you."

"Good or bad?" Harry asked.

Sirius winced. "Scary actually, just plain bloody scary."

Harry glanced at Ginny quizzically as he followed Sirius into the kitchen. He grinned when he found Remus sitting there already. "Hi Uncle Moony. How's married life for you?"

Remus grinned. "Wonderful actually. Hi Ginny."

"Hello Remus."

They sat down and helped themselves to some of the delicious lunch that Maddy and Mickey had provided. James and Sirius entered the room and took their seats. After a few minutes, Remus finally spoke.

"Alright Sirius, come on, what's this horrifying news that you've got to share with us?"

Sirius gulped. "I think that I need a glass of something stronger than butterbeer to get through this one."

James' grin widened, his eyes twinkling with understanding. "You didn't?"

Sirius gulped down his butterbeer and then he shrugged. "I love her mate, I don't know and I asked her before I really thought about it and ... hell, I'm happy! Kill me now! I've fallen into the death trap!"

Remus laughed and slapped Sirius on the back. "You and Lexy are getting married? That's amazing! Congratulations, mate!"

Harry grinned. "The death trap, Uncle Sirius? I don't think that marriage is that bad."

James shook his head. "Marriage is wonderful and Sirius is going to be a really happy guy."

Remus nodded. "It is wonderful. So when's the wedding?"

"We were actually shooting for two weeks."

"Two weeks?" James exclaimed. "Hell, you move fast."

"Well, we want to get married before school starts up again and still have time to go on a honeymoon, you know?" Sirius explained. "Something else scary happened as well."

Harry laughed. "What you got a job?" Sirius nodded and Harry almost choked on his water. "I was joking! You actually got a job!"

Sirius grinned sheepishly. "And everyone is so shocked. I talked to Dumbledore this morning. You're looking at the new DADA teacher for next year."

Ginny smiled. "Congratulations, Sirius, I think that you're going to be a great professor."

James grinned. "Lexy talk you into that one?"

Sirius shrugged. "I bought her a rock, didn't I?"

"What does the ring look like?" Ginny asked.

Sirius looked bewildered. "I don't know, it's gold and has a big diamond in the middle. Anyway, we're getting married in two weeks, we're thinking the nineteenth of July. Can we have the wedding here?"

James nodded. "Sure of course."

Sirius grinned. "Good. James you're my best man. Moony and Harry I need groomsmen. Gorgeous, I believe Lex wants you, Tonks, and Hermione in the wedding party."

Remus laughed. "I don't even know what to say. I'm in complete shock."

Sirius grinned. "Me too, Moony me too."

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Harry picked up his elemental lessons with James though they started off a little strained they eventually became more comfortable with each other. They picked up where they left off, practicing controlling more than one elemental at a time. Harry was still struggling a bit with it so they took it slow and continued the physical work out sessions as well.

They were constantly checking the newspaper for any sign of the horrors that Voldemort would be committing but it had surprisingly been fairly quiet. Not too many disturbances or disappearances, other than a break-out of Azkaban. But that was to be expected since the ministry no longer had control over the Dementors. The only thing that had come to light that was surprising was the article in the *Daily Prophet* that appeared the day before Sirius and Lexy's wedding.

### **MALFOY HEIR MISSING**

Written by: *Donna Roberts*

*Draco Weston Malfoy, only son and heir to the Malfoy fortune of Lucius and Narcissa Malfoy, has gone missing as of last night. His*



*parents are terrified that something has happened to him.*

*"Draco would never run away or anything, he's a good boy!" Narcissa insisted when questioned of the possibility.*

*His father had something else to add on the matter. "Draco likes to think he's independent but pulling a prank like this is one step too far. He needs to get home immediately especially with the current dangers about."*

*If anyone has seen the sixteen-year-old, Aurors insist that they be informed straight away.*

*Draco stands 5 feet eleven inches (and growing), has short white-blond hair, greyish-blue eyes and a sharp angular face. If anyone is aware of his whereabouts please inform the authorities immediately.*

Harry had been surprised to read the article. Draco being missing seemed odd. Considering that Lucius was one of Voldemort's prized Death Eaters, Harry highly doubted that something had happened to him. It was even odder that Malfoy would be interviewed for the profit, considering he had been in Azkaban at the beginning of the summer. He wondered briefly if maybe Draco had run away, though he couldn't imagine why. Draco was always boasting about how much better his family was.

But he couldn't help but remember the last words that Draco had spoken to him on the school train.

*"Because of you, but boggies are the least of my problems."*

But thoughts of Draco being missing were pushed aside by the celebration that was happening at the Hall.

Potter Manor was alive with wedding plans for the next few days and by the time the nineteenth arrived, Sirius was a nervous wreck. Harry was dressed in green robes for the wedding and he made his way up to Sirius' room. James and Remus were already there. Sirius was pacing back and forth and muttering to himself.

“What the bloody hell was I thinking? Getting married ... it’s ridiculous! We’re just going to end up hating each other and fighting all the time! It’s a death trap! A life of misery and turmoil! But God she’s beautiful.”

James laughed. “Padfoot! She loves you and you love her. You’re going to be really happy. Now let’s go down and get you married before you give yourself a heart attack.”

“God ... I’m getting married!” Sirius exclaimed.

Harry laughed as he followed the three of them down and out into the gardens. They stood at the front of the aisle as the seats were filled with guests. Lexy’s parents were there along with the staff from Hogwarts, excluding Snape, Order members, the Weasleys excluding Percy, the Marauders, and Hermione. The bridesmaids were in dresses of forget me not blue silk and knee-length and strapless. Harry thought that Ginny looked amazing and he couldn’t keep his eyes off of her as she walked down the aisle and then stood across from him at the alter. Lexy came down the aisle in a beautiful white dress that fell slightly off her shoulders and shimmered down to the ground. She looked amazing and Sirius’ eyes were staring at her in pure desire as she walked towards him.

They said their vows and kissed to seal the deal and then the party began in the manor. Sirius couldn’t keep his eyes off of Lexy the entire night and Harry still couldn’t believe that he was actually married. They waved the new Mr. and Mrs. Black off at midnight when they took an international portkey to the Dominican Republic and then the house emptied itself out. Harry once again found himself alone with his father.

“I can’t believe that Padfoot is a married man!” James exclaimed. “I never thought I’d see that day!”

Harry laughed. “I don’t know, there was something special about Lexy from the beginning. He wanted her and look how long he courted her before she even agreed to go out with him.”

James nodded. “Yeah. But still, it’s Sirius. Well, he’s married now and

probably anxiously awaiting for the hotel staff to leave them alone.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, well I’m going up to bed, Da.”

James nodded. “Goodnight, Harry. We’ll work on those elemental lessons a bit more tomorrow alright, when I get home from work?”

Harry nodded. “Sure Da, goodnight.”

Harry headed upstairs to bed and sighed. He was making amends slowly and it was lot easier then he thought.

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## Chapter 49: Memories

**Author's Notes:** hey guys sry it took so long but ive been busy! thanks to peskypetunia for a few ideas. please review!

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### Chapter XLIX – Memories

*Ginny was smiling at him, her hair braided in that thick cord that usually hung down her back. He grinned and tugged on it, making her eyes narrow.*

*“And just what do you think you’re doing?” She asked.*

*He grinned and pulled her close for a kiss. “Nothing, I love you.” He began to unbraid her hair and as the red silk fell into his hands the scene changed.*

*Ginny disappeared and he found himself in a beautiful meadow with mountains in the distance. There was a large oak tree in the far corner and a beautiful woman with auburn hair was sitting under it in a white dress. Harry headed over there and stood in front of her, admiring the different chestnut shades that the sun highlighted in her hair.*

*"Why am I here?" He asked.*

*The woman smiled but she didn't look up at him. "Why do you think you're here?"*

*The voice was musical and jogged something in his memory that made him stop and look closer at her. "Mum?"*

*The woman looked up, her almond shaped green eyes that were so much like his own, twinkling. "So you do remember me."*

*He fell to his knees in front of her and touched her hand. Lily pulled him close, cradling his head to her breast as Harry inhaled the scent of citrus and home. He held on tightly as her fingers gently scraped his hair and he felt her sigh.*

*"You poor child, inheriting this rat nest that Jamie calls hair!"*

*Harry laughed and leaned back to look into her eyes. "Ginny calls it that too."*

*Lily nodded. "She's a smart girl. You're very handsome, looking so much like James though I suppose that's a given. Let me tell you, it's a bit of a shock to see my eyes coming out of James' face."*

*Harry grinned. "Mum, you're so beautiful. I kind of always thought Da exaggerated when he said pictures didn't do you justice, but I guess that he wasn't lying."*

*"Uh-huh, quite a charmer you, have you been hanging around Sirius too much?" She asked.*

*He laughed. "Maybe. What are you doing here? How are you here?"*

*She smiled warmly at him and padded the ground next to her. "Take a seat, make yourself more comfortable." She waited until he was sitting with his legs stretched out next to her. "I have some things to discuss with you. Important things and some not so important things. I was granted the ability to visit you once in a dream because of a*

*task that I fulfilled. I'm lost, you see, and because I haven't actually traveled over to the other side I'm allowed to be here. Do you understand that this can only happen once?"*

*He nodded, a bit confused. "Yes."*

*"Good. Okay, first of all, I can't believe the way that you spoke to your father! All that yelling and screaming and did my ears deceive me or did you tell him that you could never trust him again? Why when James came and ... never mind but what right did you have to do that?"*

*Harry blushed. "Er ... maybe, but I was angry and –"*

*"Oh, so anger gives you the right to talk to your father that way? I don't think so. But at least Ginny was smart enough to make you apologize. I understand why you were angry at him, but James had the right to keep that from you, Harry. I would have too if I was still in the picture. That prophecy contains something that no one your age should even have to think about and I know that you deserve to know but you have to think about it from a parent's perspective. We love you and we want to protect you from the big bad outside world as much as we can. James felt that way and I think that he was afraid to tell you because he knew Harry, he knew that that would take away one of the last links to your innocence. You've grown up a lot faster than you should have and I think that you should forgive your father for wanting to keep you safe. I know he made mistakes too, but Merlin knows he's not perfect." Lily replied. "This prophecy Harry, it's a big thing."*

*He nodded. "I know. I have to kill or be killed. I've accepted that."*

*"Hmm, I think that you might have accepted it a little too quickly and I'm not sure if it's completely sunk in yet. But the main thing is what you must do to prepare yourself. You know that you need to work with James, and I think that you should study as much advanced magic as you can. Voldemort is a very powerful wizard, Harry, and you need to be prepared for the worst."*

*"I know. I'm going to be prepared."*

*Lily smiled. "Good. Second, the war itself. Do you realize what's happening? Voldemort is getting stronger once more and the Ministry of Magic is in utter chaos. Madam Bones is dead and Scrimgeour is only acting as minister until someone new is chosen. While that chaos is going on, Voldemort is going to take advantage of it and use the time to act. You already know that he has control of the giants and his followers have grown. Destruction will once again fall upon the magical community and there will be nothing that you can do to stop it."*

*Harry gulped. "But the prophecy –"*

*"The prophecy means nothing!" Lily replied. "Harry, we both know that you're not ready to fight Voldemort face to face and win. It will be a battle to the death and it is not yet time for you to take the stand to do so. The Order can only do so much and Voldemort will lead a path of destruction. Innocent lives will be lost once again. It's time for the war to begin. It's already begun, but now, the world knows it."*

*Harry nodded. "I know."*

*"I know you do. Third, you have to make James tell you about the Potter Legacy. It's not very important and you're not supposed to know until you're seventeen, but it might help you in the future and maybe against Voldemort or in gaining support anyway since you will wield a bit more power especially within the Ministry itself. James never set much store by it but it's still there. Now that the important things have been discussed I have some messages for you to pass on, if you don't mind."*

*Harry grinned as he leaned over and kissed her cheek. "Of course not, Mum."*

*Her hand rose and touched the warm spot on her cheek where Harry's lips had touched and her eyes filled up. "Oh, now you've gone and made me cry."*

*He laughed. "Sorry."*

*Lily smirked and took a deep breath and blinked back her tears. "Alright, messages, let's see. I have quite a list to tell Sirius. First of all, you can congratulate him on his marriage to Lexy. She sounds like the perfect woman for him and you can tell him that I always knew that he would fall in love and that he would fall hard. I also think that he should stop pretending marriage is such a scary thing and just admit that he loves every second of it. Second of all, tell Lexy that I think that she should be keeping a certain little potion around that I used on Sirius twice when he stepped out of line. It comes in handy."*

*"Potion?" Harry asked. "What did Sirius do?"*

*Lily smiled. "Oh, I think that we'll let Sirius explain that one, why don't we? Now, also, tell Sirius that I think he deserves to be happy above anyone else for being imprisoned for a crime that he never committed and that if I would have been in my right mind, I would have given James a piece of my mind, as I know in my heart that he never would have or could have betrayed us. Will you tell him that?"*

*Harry smiled. "Every word."*

*Lily grinned. "Good. Okay, Remus next. You can tell Remus that I love Tonks. She's spunky and amazing and the perfect woman for him in every way, or so I've heard. She sounds like who he's been waiting for his entire life and didn't know that he was waiting. I'm glad that he finally came to his senses and stopped being a stubborn prat over it all. Also I think that he should recall a certain conversation we had about him being a werewolf and how he never was planning on getting married. But I knew that one lucky woman would smarten him up. You can also tell Tonks that she needs to keep a close eye on him and that if he ever gives her a little trouble she can always threaten him with ... actually, just give him this feather and let him explain it. It will be more fun that way. Oh, and tell him when you give him the feather that I think he should use it on the right woman." She handed him a grey owl feather and Harry glanced at it quizzically. "No, I won't tell you, I think Remus should." She replied with a wicked grin. "Also, please tell Remus that I say congratulations, times two."*

*"Times two?" Harry asked. "Okay, so one is for getting married right, but what's the second one?"*

*Lily smiled. "Ask him."*

*"I will. Anything for Da?"*

*Lily nodded. "Yes. Tell him that I love him and that I'm so incredibly proud of him for the good job that he did raising you. You can also tell him that I'm glad that you are more mature then he was at your age. I also understand why he did what he did and tell him that I'm working on it. I'm working on it so hard and to please not give up hope. You can also tell him that Maddy still has the Super Glue in the storage cupboard and that she promised me it could be reused if the situation arose."*

*Harry laughed. "Super Glue?"*

*Lily grinned. "I think that you're going to be hearing some interesting stories, Harry."*

*"I think that I am. Anything else?"*

*Lily nodded. "Yeah, one more thing." She leaned over and kissed his forehead. "I love you. And I'm so proud of the man that you're growing into. You're going to have to make some tough decisions and when it comes to what you think is right and what makes you happy. Go with the latter because your heart will always have the right answer. And you can tell Miss Weasley, that I adore her and that you need her even more then I think you realize. She sounds perfect for you."*

*Harry blushed. "I love her."*

*"I know. Take care of her and let her take care of you. She's just as strong as you are. Let her stand beside you no matter what."*

*Harry nodded. "I will."*

*She smiled. "Good. It's time for me to go now. I love you, Harry. Oh, and Happy Sixteenth Birthday." She kissed his cheeks and then she stood up and vanished in a cloud of white mist.*



*Harry watched as the scene spun out of focus and he found himself lying awake in his bed, grinning as he clutched the grey owl feather in his hand.*

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry headed downstairs that morning, grinning when he found Remus, Tonks, Sirius, Lexy, and James in the kitchen.

“Hey, when did you two get back?” He asked as he took a seat at the table across from Sirius.

Sirius grinned. “Last night. It was excellent.”

Lexy laughed. “The Dominican was beautiful. We had a lot of fun and the weather was amazing. Five days was long enough, there’s too much going on over here.”

James nodded. “I’m glad that you did. The weather here has been a bit rainy.”

Remus nodded. “It’s not been the best I admit; the Dominican was probably full of fun and sun.” He took a sip of his orange juice. “Harry, you’re looking a bit off this morning, everything alright?”

Harry shrugged. “Sort of. I had a dream about Mum last night.”

James glanced over at Harry in surprise. “What kind of dream? I dreamed about her too last night.”

Sirius leaped out of his chair and placed his hands over Harry’s ears. “Prongs! Innocent ears! Harry doesn’t want to hear about sex dreams concerning his parents!”

James rolled his eyes. “Prat!”

Sirius grinned and took his seat. “Hey, when a man’s not getting any, he dreams. I’m just saying that Harry doesn’t want to hear about it.” He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. “But I might.”

Lexy smacked his arm. "Dumbass. Harry's trying to talk. What kind of dream did you have, Harry?"

"Well, it wasn't really a dream. I think that it actually happened. I mean, she was there, talking to me, asked me to pass on some messages."

Sirius snorted. "That's ridiculous, Harry! Dead people do not visit others in dreams."

Lexy shook her head no as she placed her hand over her husband's. "No wait, I've read about that. There are theories that during times of trouble or during times of need of comfort or anything like that that the dead of our loved ones will come back in some form and give us a sign. No one can prove it, of course, but even muggles speak of it. It's sometimes even connected with astral projection. Like if someone is in a state of unconsciousness they can communicate for help with loved ones. It's even believed that spirits of those dead and gone can do the same thing. It's a very well-studied topic. What did she tell you, Harry?"

Harry smiled at Lexy gratefully. "She said that Voldemort's getting stronger and that I have to work harder with Da on preparing myself for him. She told me that she's proud of me and she told me something to tell to each of you."

Sirius paled a bit. "What did Lily-Love say?"

"Well, she started with Uncle Sirius." Harry replied. "First of all, she said congratulations on your marriage to Lexy. She's the perfect woman for you and that she always knew that you would fall in love and that you would fall hard. She also thinks that you should stop pretending marriage is such a scary thing and just admit that you love every second of it. Second of all, Lexy, Mum thinks that you should be keeping a certain little potion around that she used on Sirius twice when he stepped out of line. It comes in handy. What was the potion, Uncle Sirius?"

Sirius blushed. "Well, I don't think Lex needs to know about that."

Harry grinned. "Come on! She wouldn't tell me! She said that you had to explain it."

Remus grinned. "I'll explain it!" He grinned when Sirius shot him an evil look. "It was right after Lily and James got married and Sirius was drunk one night and he grabbed her butt. She got all offended and the next morning she stuck a bit of Shrinking Solution in his coffee but she had changed the solution to her purposes, she always was good at potions."

"To her purposes?" Lexy asked.

James nodded. "Yeah, it uh, it shrunk his uh ... bits?"

Harry laughed. "No way!"

Sirius rolled his eyes. "It was a dirty trick! I didn't even notice at first because it did it so subtly but then by about lunch time I went up to use the loo and noticed that I was ... well; let's just say it worked, alright?"

Harry grinned. "Brilliant!"

Lexy nodded. "I do agree. I'll have to try that one day if Sirius ever steps out of line."

Sirius paled. "Now Lex, I don't think that —"

She silenced him with a kiss. "So just don't step out of line." She kissed him again and then turned to Harry. "What else did Lily Potter have to say?"

Harry grinned. "Well, she also said that she thinks Sirius deserves to be happy above anyone else for being imprisoned for a crime that he never committed and that if she would have been in her right mind she would have given Da a piece of her mind as she knew that Sirius never would have or could have betrayed them."

Sirius nodded. "I appreciate that." He grinned and then looked up

towards the ceiling. "Miss you, Lily-Love."

James smiled. "She's always been creative with punishments or tricks."

Remus grinned. "Tricking the Marauders, she was clever. So what else did she say, Harry?"

Harry grinned. "She had a message for you next, Uncle Moony. She says that she loves Tonks because she's spunky and amazing and the perfect woman for you in every way. Tonks is who you've been waiting for your entire life and didn't know that you were waiting. She says that she's glad that you finally came to your senses and stopped being a stubborn prat over it all. And she thinks that you should recall a certain conversation that you had about you being a werewolf and how you never planned on getting married. But she knew that one lucky woman would smarten you up. She said that Tonks needs to keep a close eye on you and that if you ever give Tonks a little trouble she can always threaten you with this." Harry reached into his pocket for the grey owl feather that he had found on his nightstand that morning when he woke up and handed it to Remus.

Remus' eyes widened and he blushed. The blush started at his ears and he chewed his lip nervously. "Uh, interesting."

Tonks eyed Remus suspiciously. "Remus, what's going on? What's that feather for?" When Remus only continued to stare at it silently, Tonks' eyebrow rose and her hair deepened to a dark pink. "Uh-huh, I'll give you ten seconds to tell me or I'll strip you down and ... figure it out myself."

Remus blushed a deeper shade of red and gulped. "I ah, I don't think that will be necessary. It's not important at all."

"No, come on, Moony, I'm curious now too," James replied. "Why would Lily give you a feather?"

"So uh, Harry, did Lily say anything else to you about me?" Remus asked, loudly clearing his throat.

Tonks slid the feather over Remus' cheek. "I don't think so, Mr. Lupin, you are not getting out of this one."

"She did say one other thing," Harry replied. "She said congratulations times two."

"Times two?" Remus asked. "Why?"

Tonks grinned sheepishly, blushing a bit. "I think that I might know the reason for that."

All eyes turned to look at her.

"What?"

Tonks twirled the feather between her fingers. "We're going to have a baby."

Remus blinked. "Huh?"

Tonks smiled now. "We're going to have a baby. I found out yesterday and I was just trying to think about how to tell you."

"I'm going to be a dad?"

Tonks nodded. "Yeah, in about six months."

Remus blinked. "I'm going to be a dad?"

Sirius smirked. "We already went through this phase of the conversation, Moony. You're going to be a father." He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "Now, why don't you tell Tonks what that feather's for?"

Tonks slid the feather down his cheek. "Yeah, Remus, why don't you? Ten seconds?"

Remus gulped and stood up before hurrying out of the room, Tonks was laughing as she chased him with the feather in her hand. They heard a door slam upstairs and Sirius grinned.

“She’ll get it out of him.”

“What is it?” James asked.

Sirius grinned wickedly. “Well, a few weeks before your wedding, Moony had one hell of a sexual dream about Lily-Love and let’s just say that Lily was using a feather and ... well, you get my drift.” He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively as Harry made gagging noises in the background.

“Ew gross!”

“And Lily knew?” James asked.

Sirius nodded. “She walked in when Moony was telling me about it. He was pretty surprised he had it in the first place. Remus didn’t like Lily like that, not that she wasn’t built for fantasies mind you. Ouch!” He rubbed his leg where James and Lexy had both kicked him from under the table. “I was only joking!”

Harry grinned. “Yeah, so want to know what Mum said about Da?” Harry asked as he quickly tried to change the topic of conversation. Thinking about people having sexual fantasies about his Mum was not something he wanted on his mind.

James nodded. “What does Lily have to say to me?”

Harry grinned. “Mum said that she loves you and that she’s really proud of you for the good job that you’ve done in raising me. She also said that she’s glad that I’m more mature then you were at my age. She also said that she understands why you did what you did and that she’s working on it so not to lose hope, whatever that means.”

James gulped and nodded. “I know what it means. Did she say anything else?”

Harry glanced at James quizzically but the look in his eye told him he wasn’t going to get an explanation. “Yeah, she said that Maddy still has the Super Glue in the storage cupboard and that she promised

Mum it could be reused if the situation arose.”

James paled. “That’s not funny.”

Harry grinned. “Super Glue, Da?”

Sirius grinned as well. “Now this I’ve got to hear.”

James sighed. “I was drunk one day after a party I went to with Sirius when Lily and I were engaged and I came home and she was here. Well, naturally I tried to get her into bed but I’m completely pissed. So Lily lets me kiss her and my hands are roaming and all that jazz and then she moves away for a moment and then comes back into my arms. Well, when she moved away, she grabbed a bottle of Super Glue. As I kissed her drunkenly, which apparently I was told is not attractive in any way. She dropped Super Glue onto the seat of the chair behind me. She strips me naked and pushes me down into the chair and kisses me again so that I stay seated for a few minutes and when she pulls away my arse is super glued to that damn chair! I passed out and when I woke up the next morning with a hangover I was naked and glued to the chair. Da found me in the morning and he laughed his butt off!”

Harry laughed. “Nice.”

Sirius grinned. “Oh, she was clever.”

Lexy smiled. “She sounded like a great woman. Well, Sirius and I have got to get going. We’re house hunting today.”

Sirius nodded as he stood up. “Yeah, thanks for breakfast, see you two later.”

Harry watched as Sirius and Lexy left the room before he turned to James. “Mum told me to ask you about the Potter Legacy as well and to demand that you tell me now.”

“It’s tradition to wait until you’re seventeen.”

Harry nodded. “So she said, but she thinks that I should know now.”

James shrugged. "Alright. Well I personally think that it's a waste of time and not even important in the least but I've got to pass it on so yeah." James replied.

Harry grinned. "You sound real thrilled. Is it bad?"

James laughed. "No it's not bad, it's just ... pointless. Okay, see three hundred years ago, one of the Potter men, named Adrian Potter was awarded a title of a sort for some rescue mission that he was involved in. So when you turn seventeen you officially take over the role from me as Lord Potter and whoever you marry becomes Lady Potter, but no one uses those terms any more and it really has no significance in this day and age and the only person who will call you that will be the goblins at the bank and maybe the Minister of Magic. It's a legacy but it's long forgotten and slightly out of the times. Get my drift?"

Harry laughed. "So it has no point at all?"

"None at all, I mean it did at one time. It was a real honour and all that jazz but in this day and age I think it's a pain in the arse. It will give you pull at the Ministry if you ever need anything because it gives you power over them but I've never used it. I think it's a waste. When I was in school, all the girls wanted me because I was rich and they knew that if they married me they could become a Duchess. I've never liked the title."

Harry grinned. "Oh alright, and Mum wanted me to know this now because ...?"

James sighed. "You know, I have no idea."

Harry nodded. "Interesting. Well, Da, I also want to say that I'm really sorry for everything. I understand why you didn't tell me, Mum helped me there and lectured me in my dream. I'm sorry."

James smiled. "No problem, Harry, let's put this whole thing behind us."

Harry nodded. "Alright. Da, I was wondering though. Since I had that



dream, I feel closer to Mum in someway. Do you think we could go visit her?"

"V-v-visit her?" James stuttered.

"Yeah. I mean, I just want to put some flowers down on her grave. I think it would make me feel better. Besides, you've always promised to take me but something's always come up. We make it over to Grandma and Grandda's grave every year, but never to Mum's."

James took a sip of his coffee. "Sure, we'll try to head over there later on. Hey! I know something that could cheer you up."

"What?"

"Well, you're going to be sixteen in a few days so ... want to learn to drive?"

Harry grinned. "Really?"

James nodded. "Really, really. I uh, I have somewhere I have to go first, but when I get back you can pick any car you want to start out in. We'll go out in some back country roads."

Harry grinned. "Any car I want?"

James winced. "Yeah, any car you want." He hurried out of the room. He had to go and he had to see. Until he knew for sure, he wouldn't be able to do anything else.

"Where are you going, Da?" Harry asked as he followed his father into the entrance way.

James shook his head. "I'll be back in a bit, Harry. Any car you want!"

Harry watched his father rush out of the house wondering just where he had to rush off to. It was hardly the first time his father had rushed off and not told him where but ... he shook the thoughts from his head. He was going to learn how to drive! With that happy thought in mind, Harry hurried off to the garage to check out the cars, whistling.

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## Chapter 50: The Book of Memories

**Author's Notes:** i know that the last memory is a bit of a repeat from the beginning of chapter 2 but i changed it a bit tho not too much, but i hope u enjoy it anyway. please review!

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### Chapter L – The Book of Memories

The driving lessons had gone surprisingly well in Harry's opinion, though James thought it was a different matter. He had decided to take out the corvette and yes it had gone alright, but the problem was that two out of the three of James' cars had a stick shift. It had taken Harry quite a few tries when it came to working on getting the car into the proper gears but he quickly got the hang of it and drove around 20km an hour around some back roads. James told him that he was making progress and once he got a bit more comfortable they would try the car without the stick shift and see which one he was better at and go faster in speed as James hadn't allowed Harry to go any faster for fear of his own safety. Harry didn't care much; he just couldn't believe that he was actually driving a car!

They picked up their lessons again and this time began to take them into new territory. Harry now had total control over all nine of his elementals at once but he was still slowly progressing at giving them more difficult tasks at one time. But now James wanted to move onto something that he felt that Harry was ready for – conjuring. He wanted Harry to learn how to conjure things out of nothing and without his wand. This was something that Hogwarts never even started until seventh year and James wanted Harry to get it wandlessly.

Again they started out small but by the time that Harry's sixteenth birthday came around he not only had a driver's license (which James helped him get by having the Ministry of Magic Auror Department forge the muggle card saying that he took the test

because the muggle tests took too long; apparently this was quite normal for the few wizards that actually bothered to learn how to drive, they only had to pass a test within the Ministry of Magic first, which Harry did fine on, and sixteen was the minimum age for this to happen.) But he also could conjure out of thin air anything smaller than an ink pot. James was thoroughly impressed and he still couldn't get over how quickly Harry was learning even if he still had while to go.

The two of them had really bonded again over the driving lessons. Harry wasn't sure how it had happened but it was the day before his birthday when he realized that James had his full trust and confidence again and that Harry had forgiven him for holding the secret of the prophecy back. Somehow knowing that he had finally put his anger behind him made him feel more at ease and happier. He knew that James had noticed the difference as well but neither one of them said anything. He wondered briefly if the visit from Lily had sparked anything to make him and James come back together but he didn't dwell on it. He was just glad to have his Da back in his life.

The Weasleys (excluding Percy), Tonks, Remus, Lexy, Sirius, Hermione, Neville, and Luna came over on Harry's birthday for dinner, cake, and presents. It wasn't anything special but Harry had fun just the same. From Ron he got a tee shirt that said: *I'm the World's Biggest Canon Fan*. Harry never did have the heart to tell Ron that he thought the Canons sucked and was all about Pride of Portree. From Hermione he got three new muggle novels, the latest best sellers. From Neville he got a book on advanced defensive magic. From Luna he got a weird gift. It was a wooden box with gold etchings on the side and when it was opened the box would loudly sing children's songs. Apparently the box would keep the Crumple-Horned Snackork away. From Fred and George he received a sample of the newest merchandise for him to try out. From Molly and Arthur he got a silver spoon hand with his name and picture on it to go on the clock in their home. He was extremely touched by this and thanked them over and over again. From Ginny he got a nice black leather jacket that he knew she had to have saved up for. But the best gift of all was from the Marauders.

Everyone went home after dinner but Ginny was allowed to stay until midnight to spend some time with Harry. The Marauders had waited to give Harry his gift until everyone else had left. The gift was a large book with thick pages and a leather green cover. In gold letters it said: *The Book of Memories*.

*"The Book of Memories?"* Harry asked as he ran his fingers over the etched gold writing.

James nodded. "It was Sirius' idea originally, but I came up with the book and Remus came up with the idea to add a few things from Ginny, Ron, and Hermione as well."

"What is it, exactly?" Harry asked as he opened the cover.

"Memories." Sirius replied.

Remus nodded. "Memories that we wanted to share or memories that are important for you to remember."

James smiled. "We've been working on it for a long time now but we finally managed to succeed. It's like a pensive. Each page holds a memory for you to view. But unlike a pensive our memories are not trapped in that book. We made sort of a copy of the memory and placed it in the pages. That way we still have the memory in our mind as well. You view each memory like a television show; you watch it in the page of the book."

Harry grinned. "That's brilliant."

Sirius nodded. "Well, we're brilliant. We figured that you'd like Gorgeous to watch them with you so we'll leave you two alone."

James smiled. "I hope you enjoy them. Ginny, I'll tell you when it's midnight."

Harry watched as the Marauders left the room and he turned to Ginny. "You knew about this?"

Ginny shook her head no as she snuggled next to him on the couch.

“They asked for some really important memories of you and me for a gift but I didn’t know what they were planning and then when they gave the memory back to me I was even more confused. But this really is brilliant.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah it is. Well, shall we see what the first memory is?”

“Whenever you’re ready.”

Harry opened the book to the first page and grinned at the date carefully scrawled across the top in black ink: **1st September, 1973**. Then he looked down at the huge frame that engulfed the entire page and like he would a pensive, he twirled his wand in it and the picture began to form but unlike a pensive he did not fall into the memory but instead watched it as if it was on a screen.

*James was standing in between two people that he recognized as Andrew and Gwen Potter. Gwen was trying her hardest to tame down James’ hair as he squirmed uncomfortably. “Mum, stop it! It’s not going to go down!”*

*Gwen sighed. “I know; you inherited the same rat nest that your father and grandfather have! But I can hope.”*

*Andrew laughed and slipped his arm around his wife’s waist. “And you, Lady Potter, are hopelessly in love with both of us. Now, James, we expect you to write us at least once a week for the first few weeks of school and please stay out of trouble.”*

*James grinned wickedly. “Like you did when you were in school, right Da?”*

*Andrew blushed. “Yes, well, just behave.”*

*Gwen leaned down to kiss his cheeks. “Have a good term, Sweetheart.”*

*James waved goodbye to his parents and hurried off towards the train. He dragged his trunk up the few steps and onto the train and*

*stopped when he noticed a redhead trying to drag her trunk up.  
“Need a hand with that?”*

*The redhead rolled her eyes. “No, I’m struggling with this for my own fun!”*

*James grinned and jumped down to help her out. Once her trunk was carefully stacked in the compartment next to his he held out his hand.  
“I’m James Potter.”*

*She nodded, her green eyes twinkling and mesmerizing the eleven-year-old James. “Lily Evans, thanks for your help. I have to go down and say goodbye to my parents.”*

*“Sure, see you around.” He watched her go and then let out a whoosh when an elbow hit him in the stomach. “Ouch!”*

*Sirius grinned. “Hey Potter, how’s it going?”*

*“Sirius! Man, I haven’t seen you in ... two years!”*

*Sirius nodded. “Yeah, Mum thinks your folks are too lenient and decided we couldn’t go to the summer cabin anymore because you were a bad influence.”*

*James snorted. “Me, a bad influence? More like the other way around. The first day I met you, you were playing tricks on the neighbours. You were making things disappear and hiding things or knocking on doors and running away and wasn’t it you who stole my mum’s bra and used it as a slingshot for those water balloons?”*

*Sirius grinned. “What can I say? My parents don’t know me at all. Besides, you were the king of that water balloon fight.”*

*James laughed. “Yeah, until Mum found out that we had her bra. Come on, let’s go find a compartment. It’s great to see you again!”*

*Sirius nodded. “Yeah, I had so much fun that summer I was hoping we would run into each other again.”*

*"Me too, I actually just said so this morning and Mum just sort of pursed her lips and said something about your parents being a bad influence."*

*He laughed. "Your mum rocks!"*

*They stepped into a compartment where a boy with dark brown hair and golden brown eyes was curled up in the corner, a book open in his lap.*

*"Oy," James replied. "Is this compartment taken?"*

*The boy looked up and shook his head. "No, it's only me in here, make yourselves comfortable."*

*Sirius nodded. "We will do that, mate." He plopped down in the seat across from him and stretched his legs out.*

*James rolled his eyes and then held his hand out to the boy. "I'm James Potter and this prat here is Sirius Black. Are you a first year too?"*

*He nodded. "Yeah, I'm Remus Lupin. Are you guys from London?"*

*"Nah, I'm from Scotland but Sirius lives in London."*

*Remus nodded. "Neat. So are you guys nervous about starting school?"*

*Sirius shrugged. "I'm happy just to not see my parents for ten months."*

*"Don't blame you, mate." James muttered. "Hey, want to play a game of Exploding Snap?"*

*The compartment door opened and small chubby boy walked in with faded blonde hair. He looked around nervously for a moment. "Is this compartment full?"*

*Sirius eyed him carefully for a minute. "Depends, who are you?"*

*"M-m-my name's P-P-Peter Pettigrew." He stuttered.*

*James' eyebrow rose slightly. "No need to stutter, mate, we don't bite."*

*"Much." Remus replied causing James and Sirius to burst out laughing.*

*Peter eyed them nervously again but he made no move to leave his spot from the doorway.*

*"Well, come in or get out, jeesh!" Sirius muttered. "Come on, Potter; let's get out the Exploding Snap so I can kick your arse!"*

*James grinned. "Yeah like that's going to happen."*

*Peter stepped into the compartment and the door closed behind him as the memory faded from the page.*

Harry looked over at Ginny and grinned. "Wow, that's how the Marauders met and how Da met Mum."

Ginny nodded. "It was sweet, but you'll have to ask James and Sirius about how they met the first time. It sounds like they had an interesting summer before that at around nine years old."

"Yeah, funny about Uncle Sirius' parents; though it does make me a little sad to think that he already hated to be around them so young."

"Yeah, but I think he adjusted alright and he made great friends."  
Ginny replied.

He nodded. "Yeah, well want to go onto the second memory?"

She smiled. "Whenever you're ready."

Harry turned the page in the book. This time the date read: **10th September, 1973**. He touched the memory like a pensive and it began to play again.



*"Let's put snakes in his bed. I bet he'd squeal like a girl!" Sirius suggested as he lay comfortably in the four-poster in the boys' dormitory.*

*James shook his head. "He probably would but I think that we need something a bit more subtle. You know, so he wouldn't think it was us or be so obvious."*

*Remus nodded. "I agree. Like if we could come up with a spell that would only go after him or something, that would be neat."*

*"Got any ideas?" Sirius asked.*

*James shrugged. "Hmm, let me think."*

*They were quite for a few minutes as they considered it and then Sirius grinned as he sat up. "I know! Let's use that Wingardium Leviosa spell to make things chase him all day. He'd probably wet himself!"*

*Remus shook his head. "Nah, not good enough." Then he grinned wickedly. "Let's make a deal with the poltergeist."*

*James grinned. "Good one. We can get Peeves to play tricks on him."*

*"Would Peeves listen to us though?"*

*Remus nodded. "Oh yeah, he respects me since I shot gum up his nostril once."*

*Sirius laughed. "Nice, alright, let's do it!"*

*James nodded. "Pettigrew will never know what hit him! Annoying git, following us around all the time."*

*"We really should be nicer to him though, I mean, he is the only other male Gryffindor in our year." Remus replied.*

*Sirius sighed and sat up to slap Remus on the back. "Lupin, you're*

*too kind hearted."*

The memory faded away again and this time Ginny looked up at Harry in surprise. "Weren't the Marauders friends with Peter?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah but I remember Da telling me once that people could grow on you and that Peter did that with them. Want to see the next one?"

She nodded and kissed his cheek as he turned the page.

**28th October, 1973 ...**

*"Look at you!" Sirius exclaimed as he busted out laughing. "Potter, I knew you were eccentric but I didn't think that you were the type to wear women's clothing!"*

*"WHAT?" James exclaimed as he looked down at himself and yelped in surprise.*

*He was standing in the Great Hall in a fire engine red sundress. He glanced around as the students began to laugh and then he focused on Sirius and Remus and started laughing as well.*

*"Well, I'm not the only one."*

*Remus and Sirius exchanged looks before they looked down. Remus was wearing a dress in bright blue and Sirius one in bright yellow. They weren't sure how it had happened but they had walked into the great hall and a white mist had engulfed them and then they had suddenly ended up dressed the way they were.*

*"Bloody hell!" Sirius muttered.*

*James grinned. "Oh well, we're still alright, let's go eat dinner."*

*Remus laughed. "In our new attire?"*

*Sirius shrugged. "I agree with James, might as well just go with the flow."*

*The three of them took their seats and that was when James noticed Peter Pettigrew snickering across from them.*

*“Pettigrew, no way, are you the mastermind of this prank?” James exclaimed.*

*Peter shrugged and then he busted out laughing. “Oh, you three look priceless!”*

*Sirius smirked. “How did you do it?”*

*Peter grinned. “Well, I knew that you guys got Peeves to attack me all those times so I talked to my cousin in seventh year and he helped teach me this potion that changed appearances and I slipped it into your glasses of water during break.”*

*James grinned. “Bloody brilliant, mate. We look like idiots!”*

*Sirius nodded. “I can second that.”*

*Remus laughed. “And I third that. You’re pretty clever, Pettigrew, and nice what you did to Peeves yesterday afternoon – it was amusing to see the poltergeist so flustered.”*

*Sirius nodded. “It was funny. I loved how you turned it around and made Peeves eat his own hat – neat spell! You’ll have to teach me.”*

*Peter flushed. “Well, my dad taught it to me. And it got Peeves off my back.”*

*James grinned. “Definitely and you showed us for sure!”*

*“You’ve got the heart of a true prankster!”*

*Peter smiled. “I do?”*

*“Definitely. And here we were thinking it wasn’t your style.” Sirius replied.*

*The three of them looked at each other and then they turned to grin at Peter. "Want to help us cause mayhem and chaos within the castle?"*

*Peter's grin widened. "Sure, I think that I could handle that."*

*The memory faded away and they turned the page.*

### **16th March, 1975 ...**

*James stood in the corner of the room next to Sirius watching Lily Evans as she spoke to her friends.*

*"Look at her, mate, she's so beautiful."*

*Sirius rolled her eyes. "You've been mooning over her all year. Get over it mate. She wants nothing to do with you."*

*James sighed. "I think I can wear her down."*

*Sirius' eyebrow rose. "I believe your last attempt at that involved the words: stupid, annoying, useless prat."*

*James sighed. "Yeah, she wants me."*

*Sirius rolled his eyes again. "Whatever mate; come on, we've got to go talk to Remus. You know we do."*

*James nodded. "I know. Do you really think that we're right about Remus?"*

*Sirius nodded. "Okay, we just learned about it in DADA and we talked about it before. I mean come on; he disappears for three days every month that just happen to be around the full moon? Come on, Potter, there's no way that we're wrong about this."*

*"I know. Alright, let's go find him. I think he's in the dorm."*

*The two of them headed upstairs and Sirius turned to James. "Do you think we should get Peter first?"*

*James shook his head. "Nah, he hasn't figured it out yet, he's slow at things like that."*

*Sirius nodded. "Stupid git really, funny the friends you make."*

*James nodded as they stepped into the dorm and closed the door behind them. "Hey Remus, how's it going?"*

*Remus shrugged from where he was sitting on the bed with books open around him. "Alright. You?"*

*James and Sirius both took a seat on Remus' bed. "We need to talk to you, mate."*

*"About what?" Remus asked.*

*"We know the truth." James replied.*

*"About what happens to you every month."*

*Remus sighed. "I knew you'd figure it out eventually."*

*"So you are a werewolf?" James asked.*

*Remus nodded. "Yeah, I was bit when I was eight. I was at a family picnic at the time. Does it bother you?"*

*Sirius shrugged. "Nah, you're not going to bite us."*

*James nodded. "Besides, we'd just bite back."*

*Remus grinned. "Dumbledore had the Shrieking Shack built for me actually. That's where I go for my transformations."*

*"Wicked," Sirius replied. "Hey, you know what would be really neat? If we became animagus so that we could hang out with Remus here?"*

*James grinned. "Animagus? That's supposed to be really hard. McGonagall was talking about it today ... but to try to learn it at thirteen?"*

*Sirius shrugged. "We could do it."*

*Remus stared at them in surprise. "You guys would do that for me? Learn to become animals just so you could be around me when I change?"*

*James nodded. "What are friends for ... Moony?"*

*"Moony, I like that." Sirius replied. "You've got yourself a nickname, Lupin."*

*Remus grinned. "Moony, I can live with that. Hey you two should have nicknames as well."*

*"We can figure those out after we work on the animagus. Maybe something that applies to our animals." James suggested.*

*Sirius nodded. "Good idea."*

*"Should we let Peter in on this?" James asked.*

*Sirius sighed with a grin. "I suppose. Let's go find him and tell him the news."*

*Remus grinned. "This is going to be very interesting."*

*James laughed. "Yeah and a whole lot of fun! Hey, so what do you think our animals will be?"*

*The memory faded out and Harry grinned. "I like how they just calmly accepted it like it was nothing."*

*Ginny smiled as she snuggled closer to him. "They were his best friends and they knew that he was great person ,so why shouldn't they have accepted it?"*

*"No, I mean, I knew they did; it was just the way it happened. It was nice."*

Ginny laughed. "You're an odd one, Mr. Potter. Move onto the next memory."

Harry grinned. "I can do that."

### **6th May, 1976 ...**

*"What's your problem Snivelis?" James demanded as he ripped his arm out of a fourteen-year-old-greasy-haired kid's grip.*

*"There's no way that you did better on that test than me. I knew everything!" Snape demanded.*

*James glared at him. "It was just a DADA test, mate, get over it or I'll hex you."*

*Sirius appeared next to James. "Problem, mate? Oy Snivelis, causing trouble again? Wouldn't want us to have to make you eat your own underwear would you?"*

*"You two are disgusting!" Lily replied as she came up from behind Snape. "Why don't you stop picking on people and act like human beings?"*

*"Hey Evans, why don't you mind your own business?" Snape demanded.*

*Lily rolled her eyes. "Never mind, apparently you all deserve each other."*

*She turned to walk away and James hurried after her. "Evans, it wasn't what you thought we were just playing. Severus is just angry at me because I got a better mark than he did on the DADA test."*

*Lily turned to look at him. "I'm sure that's the reason. Do you know what you are, James Potter? You're an instigator. And no matter how small the matter or how stupid the problem you can turn it into a situation, so excuse me if I don't believe that you're innocent."*

*James grinned. "I'm as innocent as a newborn baby."*

*She snorted. "In your dreams, Potter."*

*He sighed. "No my dreams consist of you, Evans."*

*Lily rolled her eyes. "Go away, James."*

*She headed in the opposite direction and Sirius' arm slung companionably around James'. "Yeah, she wants you alright, Prongs."*

*"Shut-up Sirius."*

*"James!" A girl shouted, wrapping her arms around him. She had dark black hair and pretty brown eyes. "I saw what Snape did, are you alright?"*

*James rolled his eyes at Sirius. "I'm fine Mitzy, thanks for the concern."*

*Mitzy smiled at him. "I just wanted to make sure you were alright." She stood on her toes and kissed his lips. "See you in Hogsmeade?"*

*"Yeah."*

*Sirius watched her go, shaking her head. "Okay, she's annoying as hell, Prongs. Get a new girlfriend before I hex her."*

*James grinned. "And like hearing Natalie sneak into your bed at night isn't annoying?"*

*Sirius smirked. "Girls can't resist me, mate."*

*Remus rolled his eyes as he appeared next to them. "Don't get him started. Let's go to Transfiguration."*

*The memory faded away and they moved onto the next one.*

**29th June, 1978 ...**



*"Oh my gosh! Look at those flowers, they're so beautiful!" A girl with dark brown hair exclaimed as she looked at the bouquet of roses that James had just thrust in Lily's arms.*

*James grinned. "Thanks, I picked them out for my favourite girl."*

*Lily rolled her eyes and glared at her friend as she left them alone in the hallway. "How many times do I have to tell you, Potter? Leave me alone! I'm not interested."*

*James grinned. "Sure you are, you just don't want to be interested. Come on, they're beautiful roses, I know how much you love roses."*

*Lily sighed. "Fine, I'll take your flowers but only because I don't want them to go to waste. Now will you leave me alone?"*

*"Nope. You're the most beautiful girl in school, Lily, and I can't give up."*

*"Well, at least it's good to know that I only have one more year to put up with you."*

*James grinned. "Oh no, many more than that. We're going to be married eventually."*

*"Merlin, help me. James Potter, what do I have to do to get through that thick skull of yours?" Lily demanded.*

*"Go on a date with me. Prove to me that you're really not interested in me any way and I'll leave you alone." He replied.*

*"Like I'm going to fall for that one, Potter."*

*He grinned and took a step closer. "Lily, I'm tired of chasing after you when I know that you feel the same way that I do but yet you won't give me a chance. What are you afraid of?" He asked as his face moved closer to hers. "Why won't you even give me a chance?" He slid his fingers through the auburn lock that was hanging on the left side of her face from where it had escaped from her up-do and she gulped.*

*"I'm ... I'm afraid of this." She dropped the roses on the floor and threw her arms around his neck, bringing his lips to hers. They stood in the hallway kissing passionately for close to five minutes before Lily pulled away.*

*James smiled at her. "See?"*

*"Don't see me, James Potter! I don't want this. Leave me alone." She demanded.*

*James grabbed her arms as she turned to go. "How can you walk away from this?"*

*"Because I may be attracted to you but I don't like you." Then she walked away, leaving him standing there and staring after her.*

The memory faded away and Ginny sighed. "Ooh ouch. Poor James."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, poor Da. I wonder how he eventually won her over? He never did tell me, you know?"

Ginny shrugged. "I don't know but I bet it's in here. Let's see what's next."

They turned the page and **1st September, 1978 ...**

*James sat in the train compartment waiting patiently for Remus, Sirius, and Peter to come find him. He had arrived extremely early for the school train. He looked up, grinning when the compartment door opened as he expected to greet one of his fellow Marauders and his grin froze when he watched Lily Evans come in.*

*"Evans, what a surprise."*

*Lily nodded and closed the door behind her before using a locking spell and silencing charm. "I need to talk to you."*

*James made a point of glancing at the door behind her. "I noticed. So what can I do for you?"*

*She took a seat next to him and sighed. "Why did you write me all those letters all summer? Do you think I cared what you were doing?"*

*James shrugged. "Well, you read them didn't you?"*

*Lily scowled at him before she sighed. "I'm a horrible person."*

*"What?"*

*"I felt so bad about how I treated you in June and it's been bothering me all summer." She replied.*

*"Alright, well I accept your apology."*

*"I wasn't apologizing!" She exclaimed.*

*James grinned. "Okay, then what are you doing?"*

*"I don't like you! You're rude and you're mean ... to, to people like Severus and he hasn't done anything to you. And you play pranks on people and act like you're the king of the world. Just because you're so good at Quidditch that doesn't mean like you can act like such an arrogant twit! And sending me flowers all summer? I mean ... I told you to leave me alone and then those ... well you hardly got the point. We have nothing in common, James Potter – nothing!" She demanded.*

*"So why are you here then, Evans?" He asked.*

*"To-to tell you that we have nothing in common and to leave me alone."*

*"Well you've done that." He replied. "Now here's what I think. We have plenty in common. We're both smart and have the same goal of becoming Aurors since the war is going on. We're both loyal to our friends and grew up with loving parents. We both like Quidditch. And we make magic together. You're in love with me and you don't want to admit it."*

*Lily gasped. "Of all the arrogant self-centered things to – mmphf."*  
*She murmured as he yanked her close and covered his mouth with hers.*

*He pulled away and looked into her eyes. "I love you, Lily. I've loved you for what feels like my entire life. When the hell are you going to stop playing games with me?"*

*She stared at him for moment before she moved over to straddle him. "When you kiss me again."*

*He grinned and brought his lips to hers softly.*

*She licked her lips when he pulled away. "After I saw you today I realized that you've been right along."*

*He grinned. "Knew I could convince you."*

*She sighed. "You're so annoying."*

*He laughed. "And that's why you fought me for so long?"*

*"No, I fought you for so long because I didn't want to admit to myself that I was falling in love with such a prat."*

*He grinned. "Too late. No turning back."*

*She slipped her arms around his neck. "I don't want to turn back but I also don't want to be another one of James Potter's girls."*

*James smiled. "You won't be. I was with most of those girls to try to make you jealous."*

*She laughed. "Prat."*

*"Good." Then he brought her lips down to his.*

*The memory faded and Ginny sighed. "Oh that was sweet."*

*Harry nodded. "Yeah, nice to know my Da never gave up on her."*

"Yeah, I don't think he ever would have. He loved her too much."

"Yeah."

He turned the page for the next memory.

### **25th December, 1978 ...**

*"Mum! Da! I'm back!" James bellowed as he floated his bags up the stairs.*

*Lily was standing next to him, her eyes wide as she glanced around the entrance way. "You actually live here," she whispered.*

*James gave her a puzzled look. "Yeah."*

*Gwendolynn Potter hurried into the room. "Did you have a nice time at the Lupins? Well, who is this?"*

*James smiled and wrapped his arm around Lily. "Mum, this is my girlfriend, Lily Evans."*

*Lily held her hand out, trying not to gawk at the beautiful woman. She had never in her life seen anyone as beautiful as Lady Gwendolynn Potter, the Duchess of Draíochta. "It's nice to meet you."*

*Gwendolynn's eyes narrowed and she cuffed James along the side of his head.*

*"Ow! Mum!"*

*"James Andrew Potter, if you put this poor girl under a love potion I'm going to slap you silly!" She exclaimed.*

*Lily laughed. "Mrs-Lady Potter, he didn't. I'm not under a potion. I ... I love your son."*

*James nodded. "She loves me, Mum, can't resist me."*

*Gwen rolled her eyes. "Merlin knows why, you're exactly like your father." She tugged Lily away from her son. "Well, come on then dear, we have much to talk about. Are you staying for the Christmas Ball this evening?"*

*James watched his mother pull Lily away and he grinned. She was finally here.*

*Harry laughed. "Ha! My grandmother thought my da had put Mum under a love potion?"*

*Ginny smiled. "That's cute. I guess we can't blame her though."*

*Harry grinned. "Yeah, okay, next memory."*

**24th January, 1979 ...**

*"Lily, stop, why won't you talk to me?" James asked, grabbing her arm and spinning her around.*

*Lily had tears in her eyes as she shook her head. "I ... I just need to be alone."*

*"Lily, come on. Ever since Christmas Break you've been acting funny. What's going on?" He tugged her closer into his arms, using his thumbs to wipe away her tears. "Do ... do you regret what happened?"*

*Lily bit her lip. "No, James, of course not."*

*"What is it?"*

*She wrapped her arms around him. "I just ... I feel ..."*

*"What?"*

*"Jamie, make it go away."*

*James brushed her hair out of her eyes and kissed her forehead. "I'll do my best. What do you need me to make go away?"*

*She stood on her toes to kiss him softly. "I just ... I love you."*

*James smiled at her. "I love you, too."*

*His lips met hers again and the memory faded.*

"I wonder what was wrong with Mum." Harry said.

Ginny shrugged. "Something must have happened."

"What do you think Da was afraid she regretted?"

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Harry, it was probably the first time they made love."

Harry wrinkled his nose in distaste. "Ah, well, onto the next one then."

Ginny laughed as he turned the page.

### **1st September, 1979 ...**

*"Nervous Prongs?" Sirius asked as they watched James pacing back and forth in the room.*

*"No, of course not. I'm marrying Evans. I'm actually going to marry Lily. I love her and we're getting married. I'm getting married. Lily and I are getting married."*

*Sirius rolled his eyes. "Really? And I just thought that this was a really formal party! You prat! Stop rambling and get ready to go downstairs, it's time to get married."*

*Remus grinned. "And I know from a first hand look that Lily looks incredible."*

*James smiled with a dreamy far-off look on his face. "She always looks incredible."*

*Sirius groaned. "Oh bloody hell, Moony, you're going to get him*

*started!"*

*"About the auburn colour of her hair and the pretty chestnut streaks," Peter replied with a grin.*

*Remus laughed. "And the beautiful green eyes and the perfect little dimples."*

*"I'm not that bad!" James protested.*

*Sirius laughed. "You're right, you're worse. Come on, let's go get you married."*

*The four of them headed down into the garden of Potter Manor and watched as Lily made her way down the aisle towards James. They took their vows and kissed.*

*Sirius whistled. "So Mrs. Potter, how does it feel?"*

*Lily smiled as she looked into James' eyes. "Like heaven."*

The memory faded away and they turned the page:

**31st July, 1980 ...**

*Lily stood in front of the stove in the kitchen at Godric's Hollow carefully stirring the pasta sauce that she was making for dinner.*

*She smiled at Sirius as he stepped into the kitchen. "Hey Handsome. Are you here to try to mooch some dinner?"*

*Sirius grinned. "Aw, Lily-Love, you know I only come here to see you! You are the one true love of my life."*

*She laughed and kissed his cheek. "Liar. So how's Arlene?"*

*"Arlene?" Sirius asked puzzled for a moment.*

*Lily nodded. "Yeah Arlene, that pretty brunette you were dating last week?"*



Sirius grinned. "Ohhh Arlene ... she's good I guess. Now I'm with Monica."

Lily rolled her eyes. "Do you ever change?"

He grinned. "Why would I want to tie myself down like Prongs did? Come now Lily-Love, I'm not the commitment type."

"So I noticed. So how many hearts have you broken in the last month?"

"I don't break hearts, don't even bruise them!" Sirius replied.

"Uh-huh, well let's see ... in the last month alone I recall you being with Beth, Louisa, Janet, Dana, Arlene, and now Monica. You break hearts, Sirius." Lily replied, patting him on the cheek.

He grinned. "Nah, I'm very careful about it. And you forgot about Diana."

Lily sighed as she shook her head at him. He was never going to change. He had always been a player, and she wondered how long it would be until he met the woman that he could stand for longer than a week. "Yeah, so how was your day?"

He shrugged. "Same old, same old. Alastor had us practice some hunting thing today. You know, if we are hot on the trail of a Death Eater, we know how to track them. It was pretty dull."

Lily smiled. "Sounds like it might have been interesting." She placed a hand on her stomach as another cramp shot through her. "Sirius, where's James at?"

"He was just going upstairs to change. You see, one of the programs was that we were in a forested area and with all the rain we've had lately it was little muddy. Prongs fell in the mud a bit... okay I might have pushed him but it was all in good fun." Sirius replied with a grin. "Why?"

*She gulped. "Well, because I think I might be – God!" She exclaimed as she felt the liquid pour down her legs.*

*Sirius paled considerably. "Oh, um... er... that's not good."*

*Lily rolled her eyes. "I didn't wet myself, you prat! My water just broke!"*

*"Oh... is that good?"*

*Lily smacked his arm. "I'm going into labour!" When he continued to stare at her dumbfounded she slapped his arm. "I'm having the baby!"*

*Sirius' jaw dropped open. "Now?"*

*"Not this very second but I need to get to St. Mungo's!"*

*"Well, I – okay... JAMES!" He yelled as he hurried to the kitchen doorway.*

*Lily rolled her eyes. "You're not helping!" she yelled.*

*"JAMES! GET DOWN HERE QUICK! LILY NEEDS YOU!" Sirius bellowed. He glanced over at Lily again, his face pale before he turned back towards the stairs. "PRONGS!"*

*James bolted into the kitchen seconds later. "Lily? What's up? God! What happened?" He asked as he stared at the mess on the kitchen floor, a horrified look in his eyes.*

*Lily cleaned it up with a quick charm silently cursing men and their stupidity. "James, I think I'm having the baby."*

*James paled. "Now?"*

*"JUST GET ME TO ST. MUNGO'S!" She shrieked.*

*James nodded. "Sirius, get Lily's bag and tell Remus and Peter. Meet us at the hospital." He grabbed the portkey that they had received for the occasion and quickly pulled her into his arms and they both*

*disappeared.*

*They appeared in the waiting room and James quickly rushed her over to the front desk. "My... my wife, she's going to have a baby."*

*The woman rolled her eyes. "So bring her to the maternity ward. Next!"*

*Lily tugged James along to the proper ward, clutching her stomach as the pain barrelled through her. She was quickly brought to a room and her healer came in to see her.*

*"How does it look?" James asked, a slightly panicked look on his face.*

*The healer smiled. "Everything looks good. I think that very soon you will have a healthy baby. Just be patient."*

*Lily nodded as James only continued to hold Lily's hand extremely pale.*

*Hours passed and finally the healer told Lily that she could start pushing. James sat behind her, holding both of her hands in his. He yelped out loud when she squeezed so hard that he was sure she broke a bone.*

*"Oh, you think that hurt, James?" She asked sweetly.*

*He nodded. "Lil, I think you broke my hand."*

*Lily nodded. "OH, YOU THINK THAT HURT? WELL, I'M TRYING TO GET A BLOODY PERSON OUT OF ME!!"*

*James gulped and decided that it was best not to comment. She called him everything under the sun; swore never to make love with him again; promised to hex his bits off at the first opportunity; and threatened to kill him before the red bundle slid out and she sighed in relief. James watched curiously as the healers cleaned the red thing off and then the healer smiled.*

*"Congratulations Lord and Lady Potter, you have a son."*

*James grinned as the healer placed the tiny red baby in his wife's arms. He thought that he looked a bit like a red potato with black hair. He was all scrunched up and very pink. "We have a son."*

*Lily nodded as she smiled up at her husband. "We have a son." She kissed James softly. "But what are we going to name him?"*

*James thought for a moment and then he grinned. "Well... I was thinking that maybe we could name him after your father. I know that you were very close with him. So what about Harold Potter?"*

*Tears welled up in Lily's eyes. "I'd like that. But not Harold, just Harry. Harry James Potter."*

*James grinned. "It sounds perfect." He kissed her softly and then he walked towards the door and pulled it open to where Sirius, Remus, and Peter were pacing the hall.*

*"It's a boy. Come on in and see."*

*They walked into the room and found Lily sitting on the bed holding the tiny bundle in her arms.*

*"Guys, I'd like for you to meet the newest Marauder, Harry James Potter." James replied, leaning down to place a tiny kiss on his son's head.*

*Sirius looked at him curiously. "Is he supposed to look like that?"*

*Lily rolled her eyes. "Yes!"*

*Sirius grinned. "Oh okay. I guess we all can't look amazing on our first day. Man, he's even got your hair already! The poor bloke."*

*Remus smiled. "But he's got Lily's eyes, I wonder if they will turn green."*

*Peter grinned. "He's cute alright." His eyes glanced around randomly and then he managed a weird grin at his friends.*

*"You okay there, Wormtail?" James asked. "You've been acting odd lately."*

*Peter shrugged. "I'm a little tired."*

*"Cool. Anyway, I'm a Da!"*

*"Can I hold him, Prongs?" Sirius asked.*

*James nodded, as he carefully deposited the tiny bundle into his godfather's arms. "Here you go, Harry; this is your godfather, Uncle Sirius."*

*Sirius grinned. "Hey little man, I'm holding you to be the one to bring on the Marauders of the new generation. You know, lots of pranks and shagging lots of girls." He winced when Lily slapped his arm. "Okay, well we won't tell your mum about that part. Can you handle that?"*

*Harry yawned but didn't open his eyes.*

*James grinned. "I think he likes you."*

*"He's so tiny. He's the perfect weight for a quaffle."*

*"SIRIUS!" Lily exclaimed, her eyes widening in horror.*

*Sirius grinned. "Just kidding, Lily-Love."*

*"I'm sure," Lily replied.*

*Remus laughed. "Yeah, Sirius won't use the kid as a quaffle, Lily."*

*Sirius grinned wickedly. "At least not until he's about one."*

*Lily laughed from the bed. "Do it and die! Now bring me back my son."*

*James grinned and placed Harry back into his wife's arms. "My*

*pleasure.” Then he leaned over and kissed her softly.*

The memory faded from view and smaller ones appeared on the pages: memories of Harry’s first word “Da”; first time he crawled; first time he walked; then the memories changed to more recent ones: the first time he met Ron and Hermione; the sex talk with the Marauders from Sirius’ POV (Harry had a feeling that Sirius added that in there just so that he would be embarrassed watching it with Ginny); his first kiss with Ginny; the day that they told each other that they loved each other; the day that he talked about his dream about Lily and all the interesting stories that he had heard; and other ones. The last few pages were left blank in the hopes of adding other good memories to the mix. It was the perfect present in every way.

“Harry. this is such a wonderful gift.” Ginny replied.

Harry nodded. “Yeah it was. I love the memories from you.”

She blushed. “I thought that they were worth remembering.”

He leaned down to kiss her softly, closing the book and placing it on the table. “Always.” Then he pulled her close for a long kiss. “I love you, Ginny.”

She smiled. “I love you too. Happy Birthday.”

Then she cuddled into his arms and lost herself in the kiss.

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## Chapter 51: Ginny's Quest

**Author's Notes:** hey everyone sry it took me so long to post but im cramming for midterms and things right now and i know its really short but ill make it up to u in upcoming chapters! i promise! please review!! and thanks to peskypetunia for some help organizing my thoughts.

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## **Chapter LI – Ginny's Quest**

When Ginny returned home after viewing the *Book of Memories* with Harry, she was tired and she felt happy for her boyfriend. He had just been so incredibly happy to view those memories about the Marauders and his parents. It had really been the most amazing gift. She sighed as she stepped out of the fire place; she was ready for bed. She turned at the sound behind her and grinned.

"Bill, what are you doing here?"

Bill shrugged. "Home for a few days, I need to talk to you. Come on into the common room for a minute."

She nodded, holding back a yawn as she followed her brother into the common room wondering what he needed to talk to her about so late at night. She curled up in her favourite chair and smiled warmly at him. "So what's up, Bill?"

"Well, Firefly, I've got an interesting proposition for you. I haven't run it by Mum and Dad yet so no decisions have been made." He replied.

She glanced up at him in surprise. "This sounds pretty interesting. What's going on?"

He grinned. "Something very interesting I do believe."

"Come on, Bill, don't leave me in suspense!"

He laughed. "Alright, alright. Gin, I saw your report card at the end of the year."

Ginny shrugged. "Okay, so what does that have to do with anything? I did good."

"Good?" Bill said with a laugh. "Firefly, you did amazing! You got Outstanding on everything! Do you realize that you actually got higher marks than Hermione, girl genius, did when she was your age?"

“No. I didn’t realize that. So what, Bill, I worked hard?”

Bill shook his head. “No, I don’t think that you quite realize how amazing that is. Mum and Dad are so proud of you and I can’t even begin to tell you how proud of you that I am. That’s so amazing.”

“Okay, I get it,” Ginny replied, blushing a bit at all of the compliments. “What does this have to do with this proposition that you have for me?”

He sighed. “I have this friend that I met when I was working in Egypt. Fleur actually knows her too, you remember Fleur Delacour, the Beauxbatons champion? Well, I’ve been working with her and she actually went to school with this girl. Her name is Emma Stanton and she is actually from Montreal, Canada but she moved to France when she was ten. She’s currently living in New York City.”

Ginny raised her eyebrow. “Okay, Bill, where are you going with this?”

“Firefly, Emma is a genius and she’s an incredibly powerful witch. She has powers that most people can’t even dream of.”

“Like what kind of powers?” She asked.

“Wandless mostly, but she also can do incredible defence lessons. She has power, Ginny.”

“I’m not sure where you’re going with this. Okay, so she’s more advanced than most witches?”

Bill sighed. “I’m having trouble explaining this. Okay, Emma is different from most witches. She has this connection with nature and her magic is more increased than most because of this connection. She uses nature in her magic. Does that make sense?”

Ginny shook her head. “Not really.”

“Alright, let’s start with you first. Gin, I know what you’ve been going through lately. These changes that you’ve been feeling. I’ve noticed



them and I know that you have but you don't understand what you're feeling." He replied. "Fleur noticed when I told her and she knew what it was right away and she told me that Emma had it. That's when I remembered everything."

"Bill, what are you talking about?"

He sighed. "Alright, it goes like this – you can feel the emotions of others, what they're feeling, how they're feeling and how they react to things. Am I right?"

Ginny shook her head. "No, why ... why would I feel that?"

"Ginny, I know you. You've been having these feelings for a long time, don't deny it. Even when you were little you had them. Do you remember that time when I got into a fist fight with Charlie over something stupid that I can't even remember and Mum found out? She yelled us out so bad and I remember sitting in my room, I was sixteen years old and you were only four years old and I remember that you came into my room and jumped up onto the bed and snuggled into me the way you always did. You wrapped your arms around me and you told me not to be sad and that Mum knew that boys fight all the time and that just because I had been lectured didn't mean that it was a time for me to be sad and depressed and angry or feeling guilty. You didn't use those exact words, mind you, but it came to mean the same idea. You understood what I was feeling."

Ginny shook her head as she looked up at her brother. "No, I didn't that would be impossible. I just ... I was little and I recognized that you were sad because you had gotten in trouble. That's all."

"No, Firefly, that's not all. It wasn't only that one time. You knew the exact moment when Charlie had broken up with that girl that he dated at Hogwarts for a year, Anna Simkoe. He came home and you just rushed into his arms and told him how sorry you were and how much of a horrible person Anna was for breaking his heart. At the time, no one questioned how you knew this. But you knew, Gin, you knew before anyone else did. Or the time when Fred fell out of the tree in the back and he broke his leg and George was only half way to the house when you came bolting out and rushed over to comfort Fred

until Mum came out. There's been countless other times, Ginny, don't tell me that I'm imagining these things. You know that I'm right. And I think that this power of yours increased a bit after the Chamber incident, especially with a certain dark-haired green-eyed boy. Who has it been in the last year or two that has been able to comfort Harry or be able to help him get past his fears and anxieties? You. Who has it been that has been able to understand what he's been going through or what he's been feeling? You. Ginny, it's you that can comfort him or explain why he's feeling the way he is. You're connection to Harry seems to be stronger than to others and this feeling idea occurs strongest with people you love." He explained. "You're an empath."

Ginny stared at her brother with a look of wonder and confusion in her eyes. She couldn't possibly believe what he was saying because it sounded so ridiculous but at the same time she knew that he wasn't lying. She could remember all the incidents that he had mentioned as well as ones he hadn't. She did always seem to know when her family or her friends or her boyfriend were sad or upset or unhappy in some way. But did this really mean that she could read moods and emotions?

"Bill, I ... are you sure about this? I mean, an empath? I've never heard of it so how do you know that I have this ability?" She asked.

He sighed. "An empath is a person who can sense the feelings, moods, emotions, and sometimes the basic thoughts of others. The empath tends to have stronger powers in the sense of those they love or care about than to strangers but they can feel the powers for both. The powers of an empath can branch off into many other power sources as well."

"Like what else?"

"Well, I don't know the specifics, but things like Runes that are connected to the powers of those that make wands, staffs, magical stones – theories are connected to this. I'm not saying that you can do those things but I'm saying that part of the empathic power is connected to that. Defence can also become more useful with this ability as well as ideas of mystic foresight and many others."

“Wow, and you think that I have all this?”

Bill nodded. “It would explain your powers and your exceptional grades. One other quality of an empath is to be extremely intelligent and extremely smart as well as a very fast learner. Qualities that you all possess, Firefly.”

Ginny sighed. “So what am I supposed to do with all of this?”

Bill smiled. “Learn more about it and learn more about yourself and what you’re capable of. Emma Stanton can teach you these things.”

“Will she though?”

Bill nodded. “She will but there’s a catch. You have to go to New York City.”

“I – what? New York? I have to go to America. Why?”

“Because that’s where Emma is. She says that she needs you alone for three months and then after that you won’t need her anymore and that everything else you do will be done by yourself.”

“Three months? Bill, there’s only one month left of summer!” Ginny exclaimed. “I can’t just go to America!”

Bill smiled. “Sure you can. I already talked about it with Dumbledore and he thinks that it’s more important than school at the moment. He’s giving you permission to go and return to Hogwarts in November. You’ll catch up just fine with your notes and everything and if you need help, Dumbledore is willing to help you considering it is your O.W.L year.”

Ginny stared at her brother in shock. “Wow, I guess this has really been thought out, eh?”

He nodded. “It’s up to you. Three months isn’t really that long, Gin.”

She was silent for a moment before she spoke. “And she’s going to

teach me things about myself and about the potential of my power?”

“Yeah, she is.”

“So if I decided to go, when would I leave?”

“Tomorrow night.”

“To-tomorrow night? So I won’t even be here for my birthday?”

Bill shook his head. “No, you wouldn’t be. What do you say, Firefly, it’s an opportunity of a lifetime?”

“Why now? I mean, I’m going to be fifteen, shouldn’t I wait until I’m a bit older for something like this?”

“No, because your powers are starting to get stronger as you reach closer to adulthood and if you want to learn how to control them and what those powers are, you need to learn now.” Bill explained. “So what do you say, Firefly, are you going to go to New York City?”

Ginny smiled and chewed her bottom lip nervously. “Yes.”

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## Chapter 52: Breaking the News

**Author's Notes:** sry it took so long im still swamped with midterms!  
plz review!!

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### Chapter LII – Breaking the News

Ginny woke up the next morning with her head spinning. She wondered if everything that had happened the night before had all been a dream. Was her mind playing tricks on her? Creating fantasies of her having these untapped skills? Or maybe it had really happened. Was Bill right? Did she really have all of these untapped

powers? And had she really agreed to go study with this woman for three months in America? She stared up at the ceiling; wondering and she barely glanced at the door when she heard the knock.

“Come in.”

She sat up when she realized that it was Bill and Charlie who had just come into her room.

“Hey Firefly, how are you feeling?”

Ginny sighed. “I didn’t dream it all last night, did I?”

Charlie shook his head and took a seat on the edge of her bed. “No Shortstop, you didn’t dream it last night. I’m sorry that I wasn’t here to tell you the news like Bill was. Are you regretting the decision? Bill mentioned that you seemed odd about everything. Not that we expected anything else, but you get my drift?”

“No Charlie, I’m not regretting anything. It’s just ... it’s so surprising and there’s something that I never even thought about when I agreed to go on this trip thing.”

Bill nodded as he smiled at her. “Harry.”

Ginny nodded, a sad smile on her face. “How is he going to react to me going away for three whole months?”

Charlie sighed. “Sweetie, he loves you. You and Harry have a really special relationship. Both of you found each other so young and you know that you’re so in love with him. The idea that you have this ability to learn more about your own magic and about what you’re capable of ... don’t you think that he’s going to be happy for you and that he’ll understand?”

“I know that he’ll be both of those things. But I’m not going to see him for three months!”

Bill smiled, a knowing look on his face. “So you can make up when you get back. Gin, it’s not like you can’t write to him.”

"It's not the same. I'm going to miss him so much and then when I get back I won't be able to spend a lot of time with him because I will be trying to catch up on the first two months of my O.W.L. year." She explained.

Bill smiled and sat down next to her, pulling her into his arms. "Firefly, what are you afraid of? Not seeing Harry for three months or losing him?"

Ginny buried her face into his shoulder. "Both."

Charlie sighed and gently ruffled his hand through her sleep-tousled hair. "Shortstop, you're being ridiculous! Harry wouldn't leave you if his life depended on it."

Bill nodded. "He loves you and he needs you. He's going to miss you naturally but he's going to be so happy for you."

"I know," she murmured as she wiped tears from her eyes. "I don't even know why I'm crying."

Bill laughed. "You always were emotional. Come on, Firefly, I don't want you leaking like a hose all over me!" When she laughed he kissed the top of her head. "Brat! Firefly, you're just scared. I mean you're going to a foreign country with a woman that you don't even know and you're leaving everyone that you love behind in the process. It's understandable. Now are you ready to get up and go downstairs to break the news to Mum and Dad?"

She shook her head. "Is Mum going to flip out?"

Charlie laughed. "Definitely! Her baby girl leaving the country by herself for three whole months! She's going to throw a fit! But Dad will calm her down, eventually. Bill and I actually mentioned this to Dad before and he agreed with us. It's a perfect opportunity for you to learn more about yourself and your magical abilities. Mum will allow it because she's outnumbered, but she'll flip out."

She nodded. "I have to go see Harry too. I want a few hours alone

with him before I go. Especially if I'm leaving tonight. How am I getting there anyway?"

"An international portkey. It will bring you directly to Emma's apartment. From there you will be instructed by her." Bill explained.

Ginny sighed. "Alright, I'm ready. Just let me shower and get dressed and then I guess we'll break the news to Mum."

Charlie shuddered and ruffled her hair again. "Brave, brave soul."

Bill punched Charlie lightly on the arm. "You arse! We're going to be standing by her side."

Charlie grinned. "Damn! I was hoping I'd get out of that one."

Ginny laughed. "No way am I allowing you to feed me to Mum alone."

Bill stood up. "Okay, Firefly, we'll meet you downstairs in a bit."

"See you, Shortstop!"

Ginny watched them leave the room and she sighed. It was going to be an exciting and a very long, stressful, and exhausting day.

\*\*\*\*\*

When she was done getting dressed for the day she made her way downstairs, wondering again how much her Mum was going to flip out. She stepped into the kitchen and was glad to see that it was only Bill, Charlie, and her parents.

"Good morning, dear," Molly replied.

Arthur looked up and smiled warmly at her. "Good morning, Princess. How did you sleep?"

Ginny shrugged. "Alright, I guess."

Bill smiled. "Mum, Dad, Gin has something big to share with you."

Right Dad?"

Arthur looked startled for a minute and then he nodded. "Er, right. Molly dear, why don't you sit down?"

Molly turned around. "Why Arthur? I'm a little busy at the moment. Ginny would you like some eggs and sausage?"

Ginny shook her head. "No Mum, I think I'll just have toast. Can you sit down please so we can talk?"

Molly looked from her daughter to her two oldest sons and then her husband. "What's going on?"

Bill cleared his throat. "Mum, do you remember how when Ginny was little she used to be able feel emotions or understand moods of everyone in the family?"

Molly nodded as she sank down into a kitchen chair. "It was just a sensitive nature."

Charlie shook his head. "Mum, you know it was more than that. It's only getting stronger, especially with Harry."

"I'm an empath, Mum."

Molly simply nodded. "I know, dear."

Everyone stared at her in surprise.

Molly sighed. "Oh come on, I'm not completely daft!"

Arthur smirked. "Oh well, we never thought ... I mean."

Molly nodded. "Right. So, what about you being an empath, dear?"

Ginny sighed. "Well, Bill and Charlie know this woman who can help me get a better control on this power and learn how to use it properly. But she lives in New York."



“New York?”

Bill nodded. “Her name is Emma Stanton and she can help Gin out a lot in learning about her powers and how to harness them. She offered to train Ginny if she goes to live in America with her for three months.”

“Three months?” Molly exclaimed. “Oh no, I don’t think so.”

Ginny sighed. “Mum, listen, I can really learn a lot from this woman. I’ll be perfectly safe in America.”

Molly shook her head. “Oh no, I hear things on the WWN all the time, America is a dangerous place!”

Bill smirked at Ginny. “Mum, look we’ve already talked it over. Emma is going to teach Ginny all sorts of things that will help her so much and we’ve already spoken to Dumbledore and he gives her permission to miss the first two months of school. Because of how amazing her final grades were and he knows that she will be able to catch up. She deserves to go on this trip.”

Arthur nodded. “Molly, it is so good for our baby to know these things. Especially with everything that’s going on here in Britain with You-Know-Who and everything. She needs to know how to better protect herself. This woman will help her do that.”

“No Arthur, she’s too young!” Molly exclaimed

Charlie stood up now and took Molly’s hand in his. “Mum, you know we’re right and whether you agree or not Ginny is going to go on this trip.”

“She most certainly is not!”

“Yes, she is,” Arthur replied, taking off his glasses to wipe them on his sleeve. “I’ll allow her to. She’s leaving tonight, isn’t she, Bill?”

Bill nodded. “At midnight.”

Molly's eyes filled with up tears. "I see, so you're all against me on this."

"Mum," Ginny replied. "We're not against you, but really this is a good opportunity for me. You know that. Can't you please give me permission to go?"

"And how does Harry feel about this, Ginny?"

Ginny sighed. "I'm going over to the manor to talk to him after I talked to you. But I suspect his reaction is going to be similar to yours. I'll be gone for three months, Mum."

Molly reached across the table and gently took Ginny's hand in hers. "Is this what you want, Ginevra?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, it is. I wasn't sure at first when Bill told me but Bill and Charlie are right. This is a great opportunity for me, one that I don't intend to waste. I want to do this. I want to go to New York and learn."

Molly wiped the tears from her eyes before standing up and walking around the table to pull her daughter into her arms. "Then go. I know I'm being stubborn about it but go. It's what you want and I know that it will be good for you. You have my blessing, honey."

Ginny smiled as she hugged her mum tight. "Thank you."

Molly hugged her a bit tighter before she pulled away. "Now, why don't you floo to the manor and go talk to Harry. I want you back here after dinner to spend the evening with your family before you go."

She nodded and kissed her mum's cheek. "I will be. I love you, Mum."

Molly nodded and shooed her away. Ginny grinned and kissed both of her brothers and her father on the cheek before she hurried into the common room to use the fireplace. She closed her eyes before she grabbed the floo powder and wondered again how Harry was going to react to this news. Then she threw the handful of floo powder into the fireplace and stepped inside.

“Potter Manor!”

A few seconds later she stumbled out of the fire place and into the entrance hall. She carefully dusted herself off and smiled when she recognized Maddy.

“Good morning Maddy, how are you?”

Maddy smiled. “I am well, Miss Ginny, what can I do for you?”

Ginny smiled. “Actually I really need to talk to Harry about something. Is he awake yet?”

Maddy shook her head. “No Miss, he is still sleeping. But you is more then welcome to go pull him out of bed.”

Ginny laughed. “I might just do that. Thanks.”

She was half-way up the stairs when she ran into James who was buttoning his shirt as he headed down.

“Good morning, Ginny, didn’t expect to see you back so early. Or did I just sleep later then usual?” James asked.

Ginny grinned. “No, it is only eight thirty. Um, something big came up last night and I really need to talk to Harry. Maddy told me that I could go wake him up.”

James smiled. “Of course you can. I’m heading off to work anyway but Maddy and Mickey will be downstairs if you need anything. See you later.”

She nodded as she watched him hurry down the stairs before she continued her way up them. When she arrived in front of his bedroom door she stood there for a minute and took a deep breath. She was so worried about what he was going to say, no matter what her heart was telling her. She took another deep breath before she opened the door and slipped inside, closing the door behind her.

He was lying in bed, the blankets pulled up to his chin and his hair tousled and sticking up in every which direction, ten times worse than usual. His blankets were also completely pulled off the bed as if he had gotten into a fight with them in the middle of the night. She could only smile as she watched him roll over, pulling half the blankets with him and snuggle into his pillow. She grinned at the thought that he was a cuddler.

She walked over to him and took a seat on the side of his bed, climbing in next to him and slipping under the covers. Then she leaned over and kissed his cheek, his neck, and then nibbled gently on his earlobe. He groaned and rolled back onto his back so she moved to his lips, placing soft open mouth kisses along his jaw line. She grinned when his hands moved into her hair as he pulled her closer and kissed her back. She moaned and snuggled close, sliding her hand over his naked chest as she deepened the kiss. His hand slid down to her waist and he rolled her over so that she was beneath him and he slid his lips down to her neck, planting small open mouthed kisses there before he pulled back and smiled down at her.

“Good morning. I think that I should wake up like this every morning.”

She smiled and kissed him softly. “Me too.”

He kissed her cheek and then he sat up. “So what are you doing here anyway? Miss me already?” He asked as he wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. He climbed out of the bed and Ginny blushed when she realized that he wasn’t wearing anything but plaid boxer shorts. He pulled on a pair of jeans and then a white tee shirt before he climbed back into bed with her.

“I um, I actually came here because I really need to talk to you. Something huge happened last night after I left here and well I suppose it continued this morning.” She replied.

Harry glanced at her quizzically before he pulled her into his arms and held her so that she was leaning back against him. “What happened?”

She sighed and snuggled back a bit before wrapping her arms

around his arms. "I learned something really interesting from Bill last night, Harry."

"What kind of thing?"

"Well, you know how you have these elemental power things?" When he nodded she continued. "Well, ever since I was little I sort of have this power where I can read people's moods or emotions."

Harry nodded. "I remember. You mentioned that to me before when you were telling me about the energy thing concerning Uncle Sirius but you said you thought it came from the Chamber. Wasn't the emotion thing attached to that?"

"Sort of. But I had this before I just never really thought about it as it was a part of me. Bill and Charlie noticed it, as did my parents. But like when one of my brothers was upset or hurt I knew it before anyone else, it was like this gut feeling and it still is. I have the same thing with you. Like right now you're feeling a bit worried by the serious tone of my voice and you're confused. Am I right?"

He glanced down at her in surprise. "Er, yeah. That's kind of creepy."

"Not too creepy though, right?"

He shook his head no and turned her head so that he could look into her eyes. "Never." He kissed her softly. "Don't ever think that, alright?"

She nodded. "Alright."

"So does this power thing that you possess have a name?"

"Yes it's an empathic ability. I'm an empath."

"So what does that entail exactly?"

She shrugged. "I'm not exactly sure. I mean I have this whole feeling ability but Bill says that he's heard that it can lead to many other abilities like Runes and that can be connected to powers like the ones

of those that make wands, staffs, magical stones. There are lots of theories connected to this. Defence can also become more useful with this ability as well as ideas of mystic foresight and many others. Or so Bill says.”

Harry nodded. “That’s really neat. So are you going to have some type of lessons like I’m having with my da to explore those powers?”

She nodded. “Yeah, but that’s sort of the problem.”

“Problem?” He asked. “How can learning how to improve your magic or learning what you’re capable of be a problem? Ginny, this sounds amazing!”

She sighed. “It is amazing! Harry, did you see my grades for this year?”

“No, what about them?” He asked, a puzzled look forming on his face.

“I got an Outstanding Double Plus on everything – the highest marks in my year.”

“Wow, baby, that’s incredible!” He replied as he kissed her softly. “I’m so proud of you.”

She nodded. “Bill says that according to Dumbledore I even did better than Hermione did at my age.”

Harry grinned. “She won’t like the sound of that. So what’s wrong?”

“Well, my skills at school are also part of my ability like the people who have the empathic powers. That’s one of the reasons why my grades are so high. I learn quickly at things, which is probably why I mastered so much of the animagus form so quickly.” She explained.

He nodded. “That does make a lot of sense. So, Ginny I know that you’re not telling me something here? Are you going to have lessons?”

“There’s this woman who has this ability. It’s pretty rare among the

wizarding community but she has it as well. She's Canadian but moved to France and went to Beauxbatons. Bill and Charlie know her. Her name is Emma Stanton."

"Is she going to teach you?" He asked

She nodded. "Yes she is. But there's a catch, Harry. I have to go to her."

He glanced her quizzically for a minute. "Go to her? What do you mean by that?"

"She's going to train me and help me learn, but I have to go to her for three months and live there. She lives in New York City."

"What?"

"I agreed to go, Harry. Bill told me that he already discussed it with Dumbledore and he says that since my grades are so exceptional that he has no problem with letting me miss the first two months of school because he knows that I will catch up. So I'm going to go to New York City for three months to study with Emma." She explained.

Harry stared at her for a minute and his arms tightened around her. "Oh."

She turned in his arms, cuddling closer. "Harry, are you alright with this?"

"Why wouldn't I be?"

"That's not an answer."

He sighed. "I'm happy for you. Like you said it's a great opportunity and it's good that you have these powers and someone to help you expand on them or figure out just how much of the power you possess and you can learn to control it and things. It's all great. I'm proud of you and I'm happy for you."

Ginny closed her eyes and bit her bottom lip. "You have a but face."

“I – what?”

She grinned. “You look like you’re about to say but.”

He smiled. “But – it’s New York for three months.”

Ginny nodded. “I know. I wish that I could stay closer or work closer but I can’t. Emma is living there and that’s the only way that she’ll teach me anything. She has the knowledge and I have to go to her.”

“I’m going to miss you.”

She smiled. “I’m going to miss you too. But I can write to you, as often as I possibly can, though I don’t know how long it will take to send letters.”

“Take Hedwig.”

“What?” Ginny asked in surprise.

Harry gestured towards the snowy owl in the corner. Hedwig flew over to them and stood in front of them on the bed. “Take Hedwig. You don’t have any owls to use. Hedwig will be there with you and that way you can send me letters as often as possible. Hedwig can find me.”

“But I’ll have Midnight.”

Harry smiled. “Gin, Midnight can’t send me letters.”

She smiled and then she reached around to kiss him softly. “Okay, thank you.” She turned to look at Hedwig. “What do you say, girl? Will you keep me company in America for three months?”

Hedwig hooted and then she nipped at Ginny’s hand affectionately.

“I’d say she agreed.” Harry replied.

Ginny grinned. “Me too. So you’re alright with this?”



“Yeah. When are you leaving?”

“Tonight.”

“To-tonight? Well, not exactly giving you time to get used to the idea, eh?”

Ginny shook her head. “Not really. I won’t even be here for my birthday or for our one year anniversary. I have until after dinner to spend with you and then Mum wants me home to spend time with my family before I leave. Around seven I would assume.”

He nodded. “That’s understandable.”

“Are you alright?”

He sighed and buried his face in the crook of her neck. “I guess I have to be, right? Merlin, I’m going to miss you.”

“I know, I’ll miss you too.”

He slid his hands a little tighter around her middle. “Who am I going to hold like this? Who am I going to nibble at like this?” He nipped gently at her earlobe. “Who am I going to play with?” He twirled the locks of her hair around his right hand. “Who am I going to kiss?” He turned her head so that he could place his lips on hers for a soft kiss. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Harry.”

She turned in his arms so that she was straddling him on the bed. She wrapped her arms around his neck and slid her hands up into his hair before she placed her lips on his. Harry held her closer, his hands resting comfortably on her hips as his fingers played with the silky hair that dangled above her waist. The kiss was soft and slow. He could taste her and he could taste the raspberry lip gloss that she was wearing. She smelt like strawberries and spring and it was familiar and it was Ginny. Her hands began to move from his hair and down his back, around to the hem of his tee shirt which she slowly

began to slide upwards, allowing her small hands to run over the smooth skin beneath.

As Ginny slipped her hands under his shirt, she revelled in the feeling of the smooth skin and muscles that had formed there. He was hard and toned and she never got tired of touching him. The workout sessions that he had started after Christmas had really helped him to build up his body and that was saying something as Ginny had personally not had any complaints before. She smiled to herself when he trembled at her touch. She slid his tee shirt up a little further, positioning herself over him so that she could plant small open-mouthed kisses along his chest. His breathing quickened as she gently circled his belly button with her finger.

“Gin,” he gasped, reaching out to pull her towards him. But she shook her head and only continued to plant tiny kisses and little nips along his chest and stomach.

She knew exactly where to touch and where to taste. She wasn't sure how she knew but she enjoyed discovering just the right places to make him sigh. He was sensitive around his belly button and his breath would hitch whenever she got near it with her mouth. He would sigh happily when she nipped at his sides and he would groan loudly when her mouth or her hands brushed over his nipples. She basked in the taste and pleasure of pleasuring Harry. He was completely at her mercy and she loved every second of it.

Ginny slid the tee shirt a bit higher before finally pulling it over his head all together and finally bringing her lips back to his. When her lips met his, her emotions went haywire and that was all Harry needed to gain the upper hand.

He flipped her over so that she was lying beneath him in his bed, his breathing heavy as he continued to kiss her. His lips melded with hers as he tasted her lip gloss and as he tasted her. Then he changed directions and began to move his lips along her jaw line and down the long white column of her throat. Her hands slipped into his hair to hold him tighter as he nipped and nibbled at her skin, bringing his mouth down to the very tip of her v neck top before he moved his hands beneath the shirt. As soon as his hands brushed across her

stomach, she gasped. He grinned at her and then slowly slipped her shirt over her head and tossed it aside.

Ginny lay beneath him in a bright blue lace bra that enhanced her breasts enough to make his mouth water. He reached out a hand to run his finger over the swell of each one before he kissed her again, leaving one hand cupped around her.

“Harry,” she whispered against his mouth as he tore his lips from hers to work his way down her throat again. Then he used two fingers to flip open the front clasp and watched fascinated as they spilled out into his hands.

“You’re so beautiful, Ginny.”

She smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck. “I want you to never stop kissing me.”

He grinned. “I think that I can handle that.”

He crushed his mouth to hers again, marvelling in the feeling of her breasts pushing against his bare chest. It was a feeling unlike anything that he could describe other than the word paradise.

Ginny clung to him as he ravaged her with his lips. It was such a pleasure to be in his arms like this with the feel of his rough calloused hands, so gentle as they glided over her soft skin. She knew that if they weren’t careful, they would go further then either of them were ready for, but at the same time, she knew that she wanted him to never stop touching her.

She pushed him back, rolling over so that she was back on top and she grinned down at him before she took his mouth with hers again. She could feel the emotions pumping from him: pleasure, excitement, happiness, frustration, love. She revelled in the idea that she could make him feel all of those things. She dragged her fingers through his hair as her tongue met his, her hair falling around them to curtain his face, sending the scent of strawberries to Harry and making him moan.

His moan seemed to bring them both back to reality. They pulled back, breathing heavy and just stared at each other. Harry slipped his arms around her waist, sitting up and cuddling her into his lap. He reached around for the blankets to cover her bare shoulders with and then he grinned at her.

“Well.”

Ginny nodded. “Well.”

Neither one of them said anything and then Harry smiled at her and brought his head down to kiss her softly.

“I love you.”

She nodded. “I know. I love you too. But this ...”

“I know. Much too fast, we need to stop.” He replied as his hands continued to roam over her.

“Yes, we should stop,” she whispered, moving her hands over his chest.

Harry nodded. “Okay, we’re stopping now.” He murmured as he pressed his lips to hers.

“Okay,” she whispered, yielding to his soft lips.

They got lost in each other again for a time and when they finally pulled back, they grinned.

“Maybe we should just get out of this room.” Harry suggested, dragging his fingers through his hair to prevent himself from grabbing her again.

Ginny nodded, glancing over at the clock. “Good plan. It’s almost ten o’clock. Where should we go?”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know. I’ll think of some ... I got it! Get dressed; I’ve got the perfect plan!”

Ginny smiled at him. "What kind of plan?"

He grinned. "A secret one. But we should probably not be topless. I think that that would be frowned upon."

She laughed. "I think so. But, uh, Harry?"

"Yeah?" He asked, as he slid out of the bed and pulled his tee shirt over his head.

"Where's my bra?"

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## Chapter 53: Saying Goodbye

**Author's Notes:** i dedicate this chapter to Saz J - who helped me out a bit in concerns of an amusement park. i dont own the lyrics by Spice Girls, The Arrows/Joan Jett, and Bob Seger. Please review.

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## Chapter LIII – Saying Goodbye

Once Harry and Ginny were dressed and in Harry's case, showered and dressed, they headed downstairs. Harry left Ginny in the kitchen with Maddy before he locked himself in the study to use his mirror.

"Da."

He waited a few minutes before James' face appeared.

"Hey Harry, sorry I was in a meeting. What's going on?" James asked.

"Da, I need to ask you for something really huge and before you say no hear me out."

James sighed and glanced at his son in suspicion. "Okay, what did

you do?”

Harry grinned. “Nothing, honest. Okay, well, I was wondering if I could take the car, corvette to be exact, and bring Ginny to that muggle amusement park for the day as her birthday present/first year anniversary present since I can’t spend her actual birthday or our first year anniversary with her because she just told me that she’s going to New York for three months and is leaving tonight and I won’t see her until November and I think that this would be the perfect thing and not to mention fun and a good opportunity for us to spend time together before she goes and I know that Voldemort is out now but I don’t think that he would look for me there and I think that –”

“Harry!” James interrupted.

“What?”

James grinned. “First of all, breathe. That was a long sentence. Second, yeah you can go. Keep the mirror on you at all times and before you go I want you to set up all of your elementals on guard duty and for protection. I want them to be watching for anything unusual. Don’t be too late. And there’s a good sized stash of muggle money in the safe. Take what you need; you can pay me back later.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks Da, and I won’t be. Ginny has to be home by seven so that she can spend the evening with her family.”

“So why is she going to New York for three months?”

“It’s a long and interesting story. I’ll tell you later. See you Da.”

He closed the mirror and quickly went about setting up his elementals like James had asked him to. He closed his eyes and levelled his breathing so that he could concentrate on what he was doing. He willed Koun the wolf elemental to guard his mind from penetrating forces. He willed Mogens the panther to guard Ginny. He willed Armand the lion and Aodh the phoenix to keep watch for anything dangerous and unusual. He willed Borvo the serpent and Candlearia the baby dragon to stay by his and Ginny’s side the entire time. He willed Céleste the raven and Arn the eagle to be the messengers if

anything bad happened. And he willed Marninella the shark to help Koun guard his mind.

Once he had all nine of his elementals in place, he carefully made sure that his control was tight on them before he placed the mirror in his pocket and took the keys to the corvette convertible off the study wall. He went to the safe next and took out quite a bit of muggle money for the day as he didn't know how much he would need. He planned to take Ginny on a great trip today. He left the study and headed into the kitchen to find Ginny. He was excited at the prospect of taking her out somewhere that he knew she had never been to before. And he was excited to take her somewhere other than the manor and Hogsmeade for a date. The idea of spending the entire day making her smile had its prospects as well; especially since they had spent a good portion of the morning involved in activities that made Harry need an extremely long cold shower. She had definitely tied his stomach in knots.

He wasn't sure what he was going to do without her for three whole months but at the moment he didn't want to think about that. He just wanted to think about how he was going to spend his last day with her until November. The thought of her leaving just made his heart ache so he pushed it aside and stepped into the kitchen. He grinned when he saw her sitting cross legged on a kitchen chair. Her hair was pulled back now in a French braid that hung down her back and she was smiling warmly at Maddy as she peeled potatoes over a large bowl from her seat at the table. She was chatting absently with Maddy and Mickey about her trip and how she was anxious to go but scared and little nervous at the same time. Harry just stood over in the doorway for a moment and watched her. She was so beautiful and he honestly didn't know what he was going to do without her for three whole months.

Mickey smiled at them from the kitchen. "Good morning, Harry. I is seeing that Miss Ginny managed to wake you up."

Harry grinned. "Yeah she did. I'm glad she did. Having fun, Gin?"

Ginny turned to smile at him. "Of course. I just thought that I would help out a bit while you were being all secretive."

He grinned. "Yeah, well I didn't want to bring it up until I was sure that I was allowed to take you there. Do you want to go?"

"Go where?" She asked, tilting her head as she glanced at him curiously. Her eyes were twinkling in amusement as she grinned at him.

He walked over to her and took the potatoes away before handing them to Maddy. Then he pulled her to her feet and kissed her softly. "Can't I surprise you?"

She smiled warmly at him. "I suppose."

"Good, okay, let's go."

He held her hand in his as he led her outside and around the back of the house to the huge garage where James kept his many cars. He led her around to the corvette convertible and opened the passenger door.

Ginny's mouth dropped open at the gesture. "You're going to drive? I mean ... you can drive the muggle car?"

Harry laughed. "What? Don't you have any faith in me? Ron drove your dad's flying car when we were twelve. At least I have a license."

She laughed. "Okay, point taken. Are you really allowed to drive today?"

He nodded. "Yeah, that's what I was being all secretive about. I had to go ask Da's permission, so I called him through the mirror. He has given me his consent to not only drive but to take you to our final destination. He just made me put up my elementals for protection; just in case something happens, you know."

"Alright ... so why are we driving there? I mean, why aren't we flying or using the floo?"

He grinned. "Because it's a muggle establishment. Now get in, we've



got a bit of a drive as it's in England."

She nodded and climbed into the car. She put on her seatbelt and grinned at him. Harry put the key into the ignition and opened the garage door using the new garage door opener that James had installed only a few months ago. He backed out of the driveway and drove along the pathway around the house and over to the front gate. He muttered the current password to get through the gate (which was charmed like the portrait of the Fat Lady, where a password was needed to get through). The current password was Baby Moony (Tonks had suggested it as a joke and James had decided to use it); and then they made their way down the road.

Harry showed Ginny how to work the radio and she gleefully played around with all of the stations. She had never really heard muggle radio stations before. She stopped on a song that had a good beat and grinned.

"Hey! I know this song!" She began to sing happily and Harry could only grin. She had a really pretty voice, not amazing, but not bad either, just in the middle. He thought it was sweet that she was singing along with all of the words. He grinned as he listened:

*"I'll tell you what I want, what I really really want. So tell me what you want, what you really really want. I wanna, I wanna, I wanna, I wanna, I wanna really really really wanna zigzag ha. If you wanna be my lover, you gotta get with my friends. Make it last forever, friendship never ends. If you wanna be my lover, you have got to give. Taking is too easy, but that's the way it is. What do you think about that? Now I know how you feel. Say you can handle my love, are you for real? I won't be hasty; I'll give you a try. But if you really bug me then I'll say goodbye."*

Harry grinned. "How do you even know this song, Gin?"

"Come on? You don't know?"

He shook his head. "No, enlighten me?"

"Well, Baby Spice, or whatever her real name is, she's been dating

the lead singer of the Weird Sisters for the last year or so. No, before you ask, she's not a witch. But I did hear some rumours about her being a squib. Anyway, since she's dating a member of the Weird Sisters, the Spice Girls' music has been on the WWN a lot lately. I like their music ... it's catchy and fun." She explained.

"Interesting."

She laughed as another song came on. "Oh! I love this one too! I don't know who sings it, but I remember that Charlie always had it stuck in his head when he was younger. One of his girlfriends use to play it all the time. I love the first verse!" She reached over and turned the volume up and Harry could only grin at her as she began to sing along again. *"I saw him dancin' there by the record machine. I knew he must have been about seventeen. The beat was goin' strong. Playin' my favourite song. And I could tell it wouldn't be long 'til he was with me, yeah me, singin' I love rock and roll. So put another dime in the jukebox baby. I love rock and roll, so come and take your time and dance with me!"*

"Interesting mix, this station."

Ginny nodded as the song ended and another one came on. "This one sounds familiar too."

Harry grinned. "Now this one is a classic."

"What do you mean?" Ginny asked.

Harry grinned. "Just trust me on this one."

When the words started, it wasn't Ginny singing along:

*"Won't go to hear them play a tango. I'd rather hear some blues or funky old soul. There's only one sure way to get me to go. Start playing old time rock and roll. Call me a relic, call me what you will. Say I'm old-fashioned; say I'm over the hill. Today's music ain't got the same soul. I like that old time rock and roll."*

The songs continued in a random mix after that. Harry wasn't sure

what the station was that she had found but they played everything from Cher to Celine Dion to Backstreet Boys to Mariah Carey to George Thorogood to Abba to Rush to AC/DC and Whitney Houston. Ginny was having a ball as she simply taught herself the words to the songs that she didn't know. Harry decided on the spot that he was going to get her a stereo and a collection of music for Christmas.

They didn't talk too much more during the drive, but when Harry pulled up in front of the parking gates to Alton Towers, Ginny gasped.

"Harry, what is this place?"

He grinned. "An amusement park." He parked the car, glad that James had added enough special features that allowed them to travel a speed similar to the Knight Bus, except safer and less scary. Then they got out of the car. He held her hand in his as he led her over to the gates. He bought them both day passes before they made their way inside. It was already crowded with people and the lines for each ride were long but not bad.

"Blimey, what are they?" Ginny asked as she pointed up at some of the rides.

He laughed and pulled her close for a quick kiss. "Rides. You'll love them. Da took me here a few times when I was younger. Haven't been back in years but trust me."

He held her hand in his as they wound their way through the crowd of people and over to a huge Ferris wheel. He led her up the stairs and since there weren't a lot of people in line they quickly took a seat. Ginny kept glancing around in amazement, making Harry admit that his plan had been a good one. He slipped his arm around her.

"This ride is fun. I think that we should start off slow and then we'll enjoy some of the crazier rides since you've never been on anything like this before."

"What does it do?" She asked, her eyes alight with excitement.

"It just goes in a circle. You just sit here in this cart all snuggled close

with me. But that's just a bonus."

She laughed and swatted him playfully on the arm. "Okay – hey it moved!"

He laughed as her grin widened when the Ferris wheel began to get going into its normal pace. "Yeah it does that."

"You can see the whole park from up here!" She exclaimed. "It's almost as good as riding a broom!"

"Nothing is as good as riding a broom." He replied, turning her head so that she was looking at him. "Besides, I can't do this on a broom, shame by the way." Then he kissed her softly.

She melted into the kiss, her hands fisting in the front of his shirt as they kissed. It was slow and sweet and it made her heart ache to think that she would be leaving this, leaving him, only later on that night. She snuggled closer, breaking the kiss and staying cuddled comfortably in his arms.

"I love you, Harry."

He smiled at her, placing a kiss on the top of her head. "I love you, too."

"Thanks for bringing me here."

He grinned. "No problem. Besides, the fun is only beginning."

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry had definitely not been lying. After the Ferris wheel, he took her on a roller coaster called Nemesis that left their feet dangling in the air. She had screamed in laughter the entire time and had then proceeded to drag him off to every other ride in site. After a few hours of riding things like the Air, the Queen of Speed, the Corkscrew, the UG Swinger, the Towers, Oblivion, Submission, and Enterprise as well as many more; they decided that the heat was getting almost unbearable so they decided to head over to the water park.

Harry bought them both bathing suits, ignoring Ginny's protests, and they proceeded to explore the water rides such as the Master Blaster, the Tipping Bucket, the Lazy River, the Lagoon Bay, the Flume, Congo River Rapids, and the Ripsaw among other rides between the water park and the theme park itself. They were both drenched and laughing by the time that five o'clock rolled around. They went to the lockers that Harry had rented to change their clothes before they headed back to the car.

"Harry, this was the most fun that I've had in ... well forever. Thanks."

He grinned. "My pleasure. I wanted to take you on date somewhere special; somewhere other than school and Hogsmeade. Happy early birthday and happy early anniversary"

She smiled and kissed him softly. "Thank you. It was the best one by far."

He grinned. "Well, I'll just have to top this one next year."

She laughed. "Good luck. But I had fun."

"Hey, the day's not over yet. I've got one more, maybe two more, surprises for you before I bring you back to the Burrow."

She smiled. "Oh yeah, and what's that?"

Harry grinned as they climbed into the car, tossing their bag of wet bathing suits in the trunk. "Dinner."

\*\*\*\*\*

He took her to a muggle shop first. There, they both tried on more elegant clothing to wear. Ginny tried to protest when he insisted on buying her the purple halter top dress that she had tried on and fell in love with at first sight but he told her that it was all part of her birthday and anniversary presents and that she wasn't allowed to protest a gift. He bought her black heels that strapped up her ankles, ones that she had picked out to go with the dress. He wouldn't take no for an

answer, but she had to admit that she hadn't been trying very hard.

Harry bought himself black dress pants and a white dress shirt to wear as well as some black dress shoes. They wore their new clothes out of the store, though Ginny insisted on stopping somewhere where she could fix her hair and face. They went to a muggle Italian restaurant for dinner. Ginny could only look at him in wonder as they were led by a waiter over to a secluded corner spot where candles sat on the table with a white tablecloth.

"It's beautiful, Harry."

He smiled. "So are you. You look amazing."

She blushed. "Thank you. You do too."

He grinned. "Well, what would you like to get?"

They ended up splitting a small fancy pizza to eat with their coke. Ginny smiled warmly at him as they ate.

"Harry, this was the most wonderful day. It was fun and intense and sweet and romantic. I'm never going to forget it."

Harry reached across the table and entwined their hands. "Don't. Don't talk like you're saying goodbye. It's not goodbye. You'll be back in a few months and in the meantime we can write to each other. You can tell me all about your adventures and I can fill you in on how Uncle Moony deals with Tonks getting ready to have a baby and how Uncle Sirius fairs as DADA teacher."

She laughed. "I'm going to miss everyone so much. But I'm so excited to go away at the same time. I'm going to miss you the most."

He brought their joined hands to his lips. "Ditto. But you'll have Hedwig to keep you company and ... well, hey, I'm a phoenix, right? I can flash places pretty quickly. We can always decide on a time and place and I can be there in an instant."

She nodded. "I thought about that. But the problem is that I don't

know how much free time I'm really going to have. I mean, I'm going there to learn more about my powers and more about myself and I'm supposed to do all of this in three months time. And then there's the time difference ..."

He nodded. "I understand. It was just a suggestion and if it doesn't happen, well I'll see you in November then. I'll be waiting with open arms for you when you come back."

She grinned, tears in her eyes. "You are too wonderful for words, you know that? Most guys would ... it's just that they would ... I love you."

He smiled. "I love you too. Come on; let's get the bill and head over to the Burrow. I'm sure that your family is anxiously awaiting to say goodbye to you as well."

Ginny nodded and excused herself to go to the ladies' room. She stood in front of the mirror, trying to make herself look more presentable and to work on not crying. She had no idea how she was going to say goodbye to everyone with a smile on her face. She took a few deep breaths before she made her way back to the table. Harry had already paid the bill, making her determined to get him a really amazing Christmas present, especially because she didn't have muggle money and there was nothing that she could do about it. They walked hand in hand back to the car. Neither of them said much on the drive to the Burrow. It was five to seven when Harry pulled into the driveway.

Ginny turned to smile at him. "Will you come in with me?"

Harry nodded. "Of course."

She smiled. "Will you do me a favour?"

"Anything," he whispered as he leaned over the gears to kiss her softly.

"Will you use that handy little mirror of yours to ask Remus, Tonks, Sirius, Lexy, and James to come over here as well? I'd like to say goodbye to them before I go."

He nodded. "Sure."

He pulled out the mirror and quickly did as she asked before he followed her into the Burrow, hand in hand.

"Ginevra, where did you get that dress?" Molly asked, as she looked her daughter up and down with suspicion when they walked through the front door.

Ginny gestured for Harry to go into the common room before she turned to her mother. "Harry bought it for me before we went out to dinner." Before Molly could protest, she quickly explained all about her day and how wonderful it had been.

Molly sighed. "I already know how wonderful Harry is. Alright, I understand, Ginny. Why don't you go upstairs and pack any last minute things and change your clothes? Bill or Charlie will bring everything down for you afterwards."

She nodded and made her way upstairs. She changed out of the dress and hung it in her closet before she decided to bring it with her to New York. She didn't know what she was going to need to be honest. She changed into blue jeans and a black tank top that read: *Princess of Mayhem*. It had been a gift at the beginning of the summer from Fred and George. She stepped into her shoes and re-braided her hair in one thick braid down her back. Then she began to double check around her room. But even as she looked, she knew that she hadn't forgotten anything.

She turned at the tapping sound at her window and smiled as she let Hedwig in. "Hey girl, do you really want to come with me to America?"

Hedwig hooted and nipped at Ginny's fingers affectionately.

"Alright then, thanks for coming. I'll have you and Midnight for company." As if on cue, the sleek black cat, who was no longer a kitten but still acted like one at times, jumped up onto Ginny's bed. "There you are." She rubbed her behind the ears and sighed. She was ready to go. She placed Midnight and Hedwig in their appropriate



cages, wondering when Harry had found the time to send Hedwig's cage along in the first place. And then she headed downstairs, ready to say her goodbyes.

She stepped into the common room, surprised to see that everyone had gathered quite quickly. Bill and Charlie were standing by the fireplace talking; Fred and George were talking to Harry and Ron on the chesterfield; her parents were sitting on another sofa holding hands; and James, Sirius, Remus, Lexy, and Tonks had arrived and were seated around the room.

"Hello everyone."

Molly smiled. "Hi honey, are you all ready to go?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah Mum. Everything's packed and ready. It's all at the end of my bed."

Arthur nodded and stood up. "We're um; we're still waiting for four people. I thought that you would want Colin, Demelza, Luna, and Hermione to be here as well."

Ginny smiled. "I would. Thanks Daddy." She walked over to him to hug him close. She breathed in his scent; aftershave, mints, and chocolate. He always smelt the same. She kissed his cheek and then took a seat in her favourite arm chair by the fire.

"You've only got about half an hour Gin," Charlie replied.

Ginny's head shot up. "Half an hour, but that would only make it eight o'clock. Bill said the portkey left at midnight."

Charlie shrugged. "Mistake Hon, it was supposed to be midnight. Problem with the Department of Magical Transportation and your portkey time has been moved a bit earlier."

Ginny nodded and looked into the fire. She wasn't sure if she was more anxious by those words or more nervous.

James grinned at her from across the room. "Alright, sorry to interrupt

all of this here, but I've still never been told why you're going to America for three months in the first place?"

Sirius nodded. "Yeah I know? Win the lottery or something, Gorgeous?"

Ginny laughed. "No. Well, you see I –"

She was interrupted by a sound in the hallway and she squealed in delight when Colin, Demelza, Luna, and Hermione walked in. She hurried forward to hug them all tightly.

"What's going on, Gin?" Colin asked. "I was told that I better come over and say goodbye? Are you going somewhere?"

Demelza nodded. "I know, we're really confused by this."

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, why don't you guys sit down and I'll explain everything." Once everyone was seated, she sighed. She wasn't sure exactly where to start. "Alright, so as you all know that I'm leaving in about half an hour by an international portkey to go to New York for three months. I'm going to be in training there with a woman named Emma Stanton. You see, I'm an empath. I have the ability to extract or feel emotions I guess. But I don't know much about it and I don't know really what I'm capable of. But I do know that I need to go there and learn not only about my powers but about myself as well. The only thing that I do know about my powers is that empaths tend to be extremely smart. As Colin, Dee, and Luna probably remember from my report card at the end of the term, I managed to achieve Outstanding Double Plus in every single one of my classes."

Hermione gasped. "Oh my! Ginny, did you really?"

Ginny laughed. "Yes I did. Dumbledore says that I even managed to bypass you, that had to be a miracle considering Ron always states that you're the brightest witch of our age." Hermione blushed and Ginny smiled before continuing. "Bill and Charlie have told me a little about what possible abilities I may have, but until I start learning I have no way of knowing just what I can do. This is really important to me and even while I'm really happy and excited to be going. I'm going

to miss you all so much.”

Bill smiled at her. “Firefly, everything’s going to be great. We’re going to miss you too but it’s not the end of the world.”

Charlie nodded. “Yeah, come on brat, it’ll be peaceful without you.”

“Charles Fabian Weasley!” Molly exclaimed.

Charlie winced. “Geesh Mum, I was only joking. Of course I’ll miss you, Shortstop.”

Ginny smiled. “I know, Charlie. I just wish Percy could be here as well.”

Fred shuddered. “You actually want that foul-mouthed, toad-faced, stupid fu-”

“FREDERICK GIDEON WEASLEY, DON’T YOU DARE FINISH THAT SENTENCE! HOW DARE YOU TALK ABOUT YOUR BROTHER THAT WAY!” Molly exclaimed angrily.

George shrugged. “He was only telling the truth, Mum.”

“Molly, leave it be.” Arthur replied calmly as he reached for his wife’s hand. “Well, Ginny, are you ready to go?”

She nodded. “Yeah.” She walked over to Hermione, Colin, Luna and Demelza first, hugging them goodbye and promising to write. She then slowly made her way around the room: Remus and Tonks, making sure to tell Tonks to take good care of herself because she couldn’t wait to see that baby; Sirius and Lexy, making sure to tell Sirius that he had to do at least one good prank on Snape – she earned a loud ‘here, here’ from the twins at that one; James, to take care of Harry; Ron, Fred, George, Bill, and Charlie about how she would write to them; and then Harry. She gave him an extra hug and kissed him softly before she turned to her parents. Tears rolled down her mum’s face as she hugged her tight and clung to her father a second longer, kissing them both goodbye and then she took the portkey from Bill – an envelope with the name Emma on it – and

keeping her hand on her trunk and the cages of Hedwig and Midnight, she felt the tug at her naval and disappeared into the night.

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## **Chapter 54: Meeting Emma**

**Author's Notes:** thanks to peskypetunia for helping me out. plz review!

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### **Chapter LIV – Meeting Emma**

Ginny heard the clunk of her trunk followed by the two cages of Hedwig and Midnight before she hit the ground. She opened her eyes and looked around the room that she was in, rubbing her arm and wondering why she could never come out of a portkey straight. The room was fairly large with a huge window to her right facing out into the city. She could see that the sun was shining brightly outside and the buildings were enormous. She had seen tall buildings when she went to London but she couldn't get over the height of them. It was almost as if they touched the sky.

The window was the main feature of the room but it looked to be a common room of some sort with plush purple couches and matching chairs on a black carpet. The decorating was not her personal style but it was very eclectic. She climbed to her feet and quickly made sure that Hedwig and Midnight were alright from the traveling. They were none too pleased about the crash but they were okay. Ginny heard a sound from behind her and when she turned around her jaw dropped open at what she saw.

A beautiful woman stood in the doorway with long hair down to her knees that was jet black with dark purple and blue streaks through it. It was in two long braids on either side of her and then pulled back into a side ponytail. Other than Tonks, Ginny had never really seen anyone with such crazy hair. Her eyes seemed to be purple as well, but Ginny just assumed that it was a trick of the light. She was

wearing tight black leather pants and a fire engine red tube top with black spiked heels. Her belly button was pierced and she had four earrings in each ear. She was definitely not what Ginny had been expecting.

“Are you, Ginevra?”

Ginny nodded, feeling a little out of place in her comfortable jeans and tank top. “Yes I am. You can call me Ginny, though.”

The woman nodded. “Ginevra suits you better. It’s exotic. Means fair one. But then again, Ginny means maiden virgin. Which one are you?”

Ginny shrugged, biting her lip nervously. Emma was really not what she had expected. “Well, um, I’m not sure.”

The woman smiled. “Great hair by the way. It looks like fire, those colours of red, orange, and gold all meshed into one. Incredible. You’ll do I guess.” She walked over to her and held out her hand. “I’m Emma.”

Ginny accepted the hand and was surprised when a spark of blue energy flew out from their meeting.

Emma grinned. “Oh yeah, you’ve got the power.”

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Everyone in the Weasleys’ common room was still staring intently at the spot where Ginny had just disappeared from. The room was pretty quiet and a little unsure as to how to act. Finally it was Fred that spoke up.

“So, who wants to play Exploding Snap?”

Bill grinned. “Leave it to you to lighten things up.”

Fred shrugged. “So little Gin-Gin’s gone. She’ll be back and besides she’s probably busy already learning all about herself. We shouldn’t

be sitting here and moping. Ginny would hardly want that.”

Charlie nodded. “He’s got a point there. Shortstop would hex us if she saw us all looking depressed.”

James grinned. “Well, Harry and I should probably be heading home anyway.”

Tonks nodded. “As should we. I’ve been more tired in the evenings lately.”

Molly smiled at Tonks sympathetically. “It’s worth it all dear. You may not think so now, but when you’re holding that tiny life in your arms ... it’s all worth it.”

Tonks grinned. “Thanks Molly.”

“Harry, Tonks hasn’t been doing too well with apparating or flooing why don’t you give Moony the keys to the ‘Vette?” James suggested.

Harry merely nodded and handed the keys over. They said goodbye to everyone and then flooed back to the Manor. Sirius and Lexy came back with them as well. Harry didn’t know what to say. He knew that Ginny was going to leave and he had accepted it as something that she had to do, something that she deserved to do, something she wanted to do ... but he missed her already. He looked up in surprise when an arm fell across his shoulders.

“Harry, I know that you miss her but those months will fly by, you’ll see. Before you know it, she’ll be back in your arms.” James replied, his eyes smiling down at his son.

Sirius snorted. “Yeah, not if he handles it like you did.”

“Huh?” Harry asked, speaking for the first time since Ginny had kissed him goodbye.

Sirius grinned. “The month before Lily and James got married; Lily got called away to Italy to spend a few weeks with her great aunt. She was dying you see and Lily had always been her favourite. Lily-

Love was gone three weeks and James was having withdrawals.”

James smirked. “And what, are you trying to tell us that if Lexy here left you for oh, say three months, you wouldn’t be missing her like crazy?”

“Yeah Sirius, would you miss me?” Lexy asked as she looked up at him.

“Of course I would miss you, I’m just saying that I wouldn’t be all sad and crazy about it like James was.” Sirius explained.

Lexy nodded. “Uh-huh.”

James laughed. “Padfoot, you’re getting yourself into some trouble there.”

Sirius shrugged and pulled Lexy close. “It’s alright. She always forgives me. She can’t resist my animal magnetism.” He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively at her and Lexy rolled her eyes.

“Right. Well, I’m off to bed for the evening. Sirius and I have to go to Hogwarts early to meet with Dumbledore about our suite. I believe the marriage suites haven’t been used in a while so he was afraid we would need to fix it up a bit.” Lexy explained.

James nodded. “More like decorations. I’m sure the house elves have kept everything in good shape otherwise.”

Lexy smiled. “So I’m hoping. Goodnight.”

The three of them watched her go upstairs and then headed into the common room. James gestured with his head towards the stairs as he took a seat next to Harry. “Well Padfoot, how’s married life fairing for you?”

Sirius shrugged. “It’s not so hard.”

James laughed. “Well, could have told you that one. It will get hard though at some point, but you can handle it because you love her.

And well, it will most likely be you who screws it up.”

“I like it. I’m not going to answer that insult. Lex is amazing and so beautiful and sometimes I just ... I catch myself staring at her and just think, wow, how did I get so lucky?”

Harry watched his father and Sirius talking and it seemed to bring him back to what was going on. Ginny was gone, but Sirius was right about something, he couldn’t spend all of his time being depressed and moping about. Ginny wouldn’t want him to do that and he didn’t want to do that. He needed to concentrate on his own stuff, his own magic, and his own powers. Sirius was happy and Sirius was married. Remus was happy and he was going to be having a baby. Life didn’t stop and end at Ginny but he did know that she was the most important part of his life. He looked over at his godfather and grinned, saying the first thing that popped into his mind.

“So when are you and Aunt Lexy going to have a baby?”

Sirius paled. “I uh ... I don’t know. We uh, we haven’t really ... I mean, of course we’ve really, we’ve really a lot, but I mean we haven’t ... I don’t know.”

James laughed. “Wow, I’d never thought I’d see the day that Sirius Black was struck speechless.

Harry grinned. “It will be a day that goes down in history.”

Sirius smirked at them. “Yeah, well, I can’t wait to see the day that James finds out that he’s a grandda.”

James laughed. “Well, that won’t be for a while. Right?” He asked, suddenly looking at Harry in concern.

Harry grinned. “Definitely not.”

“Good. But when the time comes, I’ll be the best grandda.”

Foolish bounded into the room then, barking loudly and sliding across the floor until he landed in a heap at Harry’s feet.



"I don't think Foolish agrees with you."

Sirius laughed. "Who would? Well guys, I'm going to go upstairs and make love with my wife until she's sobbing my name in ecstasy. See ya."

He left the room as James just shook his head, staring after him. "He's hopeless. I think he wants to make me jealous."

"Jealous?" Harry asked.

James nodded. "Yeah, because he's getting some and I'm not, you know? It's this thing he's got. Likes to bug me. He used to use it a lot in school too while I was pining for Lily."

Harry shrugged. "So get some Da."

James paled. "That's – that's ... that's besides the point."

Harry grinned as he stood up. "I'm sure it is. Want to train a bit? I think I could use a really good work out at the moment."

James nodded. "Sure. Why don't we head downstairs into that training room and you can punch the crap out of some dummies? I'll even transfigure them into people you don't like if you want."

Harry grinned. "Sounds like a plan. Hey, can we make one of them Snape?"

James laughed. "Sure, why not?"

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Ginny had gotten settled into the room she was using in Emma's apartment. It was huge and really nice, though again, not really her taste. She had a king sized bed with black silk sheets and a red silk quilt on top. Her closet was huge and even when she filled it up with all of her clothes it still looked empty. Midnight had curled herself up in the middle of the bed and was sleeping soundly but Hedwig just

watched her from the open cage as she moved around her room. She sighed when she finally emptied the last thing from her trunk and slid it into the closet. Then she sat on her bed and sighed again.

Her bedroom door opened and Emma grinned at her. "All settled in yet?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, I think I am."

Emma smiled. "Good, let's go then?"

"Go where?" Ginny asked, standing up.

Emma rolled her eyes. "Honey, you can't come to New York and not see New York. We've got so much to do."

"Like what?"

Emma grinned. "Just trust me. It all starts with getting you duded up some."

"Duded up?" Ginny asked, a bewildered look on her face.

Emma nodded. "Yeah. Come on."

Ginny followed Emma out of the room and downstairs out into the city. She looked around in wonder as Emma hailed a taxi cab and they climbed into the back.

"Let's start with Madison Avenue," she replied to the cab driver.

The driver nodded. "Sure thing missy."

The driver took off as Ginny looked out the window. She didn't have a particular opinion on Emma but she thought that she was kind of odd and a little secretive. She wondered again where on earth they were going and what exactly "getting duded up" entailed.

"Emma, what's Madison Avenue?"

“You’ll love it. It’s the place to go shopping!”

Ginny glanced at Emma in surprise and suddenly had the urge to laugh. “We’re going shopping?”

Emma nodded. “We most certainly are.”

“But I left most of my money in the room. You never told me I needed any.”

Emma waved it away. “Pul-leeze! I have more money than I know what to do with. Besides, those sexy brothers of yours, Bill and Charlie, they insisted on giving me a wad of money since you were coming to live with me. They wouldn’t take no for an answer, so I’m going to use the money on you. You cool with that?”

Ginny shrugged, but she couldn’t help but feel a little excited. “Yeah, I guess I am.”

Emma grinned. “Good. ‘Cause girl, I’m going to show you a real good time.”

Ginny could only smile as she looked out the window of the cab at the world around them, not that they were really going anywhere. But the town was so fast-paced, everyone outside looked like they were in a huge hurry. Traffic had pretty much stopped completely and people were weaving in and out of cars to get where they wanted to go. She had never seen anything so crazy.

“Are all Yankees this crazy? Running between cars and walking so quickly that they don’t see what’s going on around them?”

Emma laughed. “Ginevra, this is NYC, people don’t have time to take a walk in the park.”

Ginny pondered the meaning of what Emma had just said as she looked back out the window. The huge buildings shadowed the sidewalks and the glass window structures reflected the sun onto the billboard signs. Neon lights radiated off some of the buildings and cars honked in every direction as if no one was quite sure of where

they really wanted to go. Ginny knew that London was said to be fast-paced and crazy, but it was nothing like this. The cab finally started moving again and in no time at all, Ginny found herself in a section of the city that really didn't look too much different from everywhere else.

"Where are we?" She asked as Emma paid the cab driver and stepped out behind her.

"The story of my life. Come on, Ginevra, just trust me. This is Madison Avenue, the one stop place to shop." She started heading down the sidewalk, walking quickly and in that fast-pace that everyone in New York seemed to be walking in. Ginny hurried along to catch up.

Emma pulled her into a nearby store and began to search through the accessories. Within ten minutes, she had her arms full of skirts, blouses, slacks, shorts, tops, dresses, and jeans. Ginny just stared at her in shock. The only other person she had ever seen shop in such fervour was Lavender Brown. Emma gestured with her head for Ginny to follow her and then shoved her into a dressing room.

"Try it on. Come out after every one." Emma replied before she closed the dressing room curtain door.

Ginny stared at the curtain in shock for a full minute before she managed to turn and look at the huge pile of clothes that Emma had accumulated. She wasn't sure what her style was really but if they were anything like what Emma wore she knew that her mum would kill her. She sighed and reached down into the pile and found blue jeans with rhinestones down the legs. She slipped them on with a white blouse and then turned to look in the mirror. Her mouth dropped open in shock. The white blouse was completely transparent once put on. The material was silky and soft and her red bra was glowing brightly from beneath the fabric.

"Ginevra come out, let me see," Emma replied.

Ginny shook her head no silently but then Emma pushed open the curtain.

“Oh, I knew that blouse would look great on you. Great bra girl, sexy and lacy, and it looks great under that blouse.” Emma replied, as she looked her up and down to try to see how well the outfit suited her.

“I – I couldn’t possibly wear this in public.”

Emma laughed. “So you wear a tank or something beneath it. The blouse is so you. I like the jeans too, cute. Okay, move on to the next thing.” She replied before she closed the curtain again.

Ginny sighed as she began to change out of the outfit. Emma was right, she could wear a tank top underneath and then only her arms would be transparent. The blouse would be more presentable and would look good. She didn’t know why she was so worried. She picked up the next item of clothing; a black leather mini skirt and she gulped. Oh yeah, now she remembered why she was worried.

Ginny stopped worrying about anything after trying on a few more outfits. She began to get into the swing of things and enjoy the fun that was shopping with Emma. Emma obviously planned to buy her an entirely new wardrobe as she couldn’t seem to stop spending. Ginny tried to protest, embarrassed at all of the money that Emma was spending on her but she waved it away and insisted that it was for a good cause. After they left every store, she would send all of their parcels back to the apartment using some sort of spell making Ginny anxious to see what she would be learning magically from her.

After three hours of nothing but clothes shopping, Ginny couldn’t even remember what was bought. Her new outfits had included more pairs of jeans, slacks, and shorts than she could count; long skirts; mini skirts; knee-length skirts; leather pants; leather coats; jean jackets; suede coats; long coats; blouses in every style and colour; tank tops; spaghetti strap tops; dresses of every shape, size, and colour; business suits with slacks, skirts, and matching jackets; a few sweat shirts and hoodies; zip-up sweaters; fuzzy sweaters that left her shoulders bare; turtle neck sweaters; low cut sweaters; three capes from a wizarding store; scarves; gloves; wraps; and even some evening gowns. Ginny was overwhelmed. And when she finally thought that they were finished, they moved onto the shoe stores. She got knee-high boots in leather and suede with buttons and straps

and zippers and buckles; thigh-high boots in brown suede; high heels in every colour and style; sandals and dress sandals and running shoes and sneakers; stilettos; pumps; open-toe heels; wedgies; and even some slippers.

Emma sent all of the new purchases, which was really at least fifty pairs of shoes if not more, back to her apartment and then she turned to Ginny. "Well, we've got a few more stops to go."

"You can't possibly have anything else left to buy me?" Ginny exclaimed.

Emma grinned. "Girl, you're forgetting the most important thing!"

"What's that?" Ginny asked.

"Lingerie. Every girl needs a great collection. Come on, honey; let's go to Victoria's Secret."

Ginny merely nodded and followed Emma. When they stepped into Victoria's Secret, Emma started shopping just like she had everywhere else. Examining a bit of everything before piling it up. The sales clerks were staring at her like she was a goddess as Ginny just looked around helplessly. She found herself in a dressing room again with many different bras. Emma was standing in the corner of the dressing room with a sales clerk who was measuring Ginny for the proper fit. Emma himmed and hawed at her and then grinned.

"You've got a great rack Ginevra. I'm going to teach you how ... what's the expression I'm looking for ... to properly showcase it?"

Ginny glanced at her quizzically. "What do you mean by that?"

Emma grinned. "Well, you've got some nice bras, sexy and cute in their bright colours and lace, but what you need is comfortable bras that ... perk you up, accent your features, and look dead sexy. Get my drift, hon?"

Ginny nodded. She turned in the mirror to look at the bra that the sales clerk had handed her and she slipped it on. It was black lace and silk with a pretty pearl flower between her breasts. It was low cut

and pushed her breasts up and together enough to really make her look ... sexy and built she thought. This bra made her look and feel sexy. If she were to be wearing that under her clothes and no one knew but her, she would feel sexy and she would feel confident. She grinned to herself and Emma smiled from behind her.

“See, Ginevra, I know what suits you. Let’s start a collection, shall we?”

They spent half an hour trying on bras of every size and colour and shape but in the end, Ginny was given almost thirty bras in a variety of colours and styles that Emma thought accented her features. Emma then picked out matching panties to go with every one before heading into the nightgown section. The nightgowns were lace and silk and satin and some of them were so revealing that Ginny wondered why anyone would bother to wear clothes. Emma tossed all sorts of different ones at her before she was told to go try them on. She liked the nightgowns, they were soft against her skin and the ones Emma chose suited her well, not too revealing, but just sexy in a subtle way. Some of them were short and some of them were long but in the end, she ended up with ten.

After the nightgowns, Emma turned to stockings and nylons and just accumulated a pile of them in Ginny’s proper size before tossing them onto the check-out counter with everything else. Once everything was paid for, Emma used the same spell to send it all to the apartment again.

“Are you going to teach me that?” Ginny asked.

Emma grinned. “Girl, I’m going to teach you everything that I know. Come on, we’ve got four more stops to make.”

“There can’t possibly be anything else to buy.” Ginny replied.

Emma laughed. “A bit, but in a different sense. Follow me.”

They ended up in a beauty store next, a magical beauty store. Ginny had been in a store similar to that with her mum when she was younger but she didn’t have too many beauty products herself. Molly

thought that she was much too young to wear makeup. Emma obviously had other plans. She purchased all sorts of makeup that would work with Ginny's hair and skin tone and then they went to the back of the store to meet someone named Jed.

"So you're the lovely Ginevra, Emma informed me that you would be coming." Jed replied.

Ginny nodded. "It's nice to meet you."

Jed smiled. "Yes, but you are wondering why you are meeting me. Well, I'm a friend of Emma's and I create scent."

"Scent?" Ginny asked.

He nodded. "Yes. I know that right now you smell of spring flowers and strawberries. An interesting scent I find. I create perfumes, one perfect scent to suit one perfect person. I'd like to create a scent just for you."

Emma smiled. "He's totally awesome at it, Ginevra. Let him do it."

Ginny shrugged. Having her own perfume sounded cool to her. "Alright."

Jed began to take measurements of her body and then he used his wand to dab at the pulse points on her skin. He created a blue bubble that burst from his wand and captured the scent that she already had and then he nodded at her. "You don't wear perfume now, do you?"

Ginny shook her head. "No, just homemade shampoo and lotion."

Jed smiled. "And is it the shampoo that smells of strawberries?"

Ginny nodded. "Yes."

Jed grinned. "This will be perfect for you. Now go! I must work, come back later to see what I have created."

Emma grinned. "Don't be so damn dramatic, Jed! Come on, Ginevra,



we've got other places to be."

Ginny nodded as she followed Emma out of the room. They went to the place next door next and when they walked in, a woman with short blonde spiky hair came running over.

"Emma, love! It's been ages!"

Emma nodded. "Yeah, I know. But I'm not here for me today; I was hoping you could squeeze in a friend of mine. What do you say Annette?"

Annette smiled. "Of course." She reached out to pick up the long braid that hung down Ginny's back. "You have a gorgeous hair colour."

Ginny blushed. "Thank you."

Emma nodded. "Yeah, I want you to give it body, keep the length and don't you dare touch the colour, but it needs something, you know?"

Annette took Ginny's arm and led her over to the barber chair before she unbraided her hair. She smiled. "It needs layers."

Emma smiled. "Exactly."

Before Ginny could say anything, they were washing her hair in a sink and then chopping it in every which direction. Ginny could only close her eyes and continue to murmur to herself that it was only hair and that hair could grow back. But when Annette announced that she was finished and she opened her eyes, she gasped at the image sitting in front of her. Her hair was the same but so different. Annette had cut it in long layers that gave her hair volume and so that it didn't just hang straight on either side of her face. She had shorter pieces in the front but not those detested bangs that her mum had given her when she was nine. She looked ... great.

Emma grinned. "Annette, that looks awesome!"

Annette beamed. "Wonderful!"

Emma smiled. "Now I think we'd both like the works."

Annette's face lit up even more as she snapped her fingers and women appeared on every side of them. They were brought back into a room and treated to a manicure and a pedicure. Emma reached forward to look at Ginny's nails.

"You have great nails, long and kept nice. I think you should have a bright fun colour." Emma replied.

The woman who was currently massaging Ginny's hands in sea salts nodded. "I was thinking about a nice hot red, Miss."

Emma grinned. "Works, do her toes the same."

Ginny just sat back and enjoyed the pampering as she got her nails polished up. Emma had hers painted in a dark purple which Ginny was beginning to suspect was her favourite colour. When they were done that, Emma tilted her head to look at Ginny closely.

"One more thing while we're here, Annette."

Annette nodded from behind her. "Of course."

"Ginevra, ever thought about piercing your bellybutton?"

Ginny paled. "My mother would curse me."

Emma laughed. "You're mother's not here." She lifted up the tank top that Ginny wore to look at her stomach. "It would be hot."

Ginny looked down at her stomach and imagined a ring there. Then when she imagined Harry's reaction to the ring there she blushed. Before she realized what she wanted she found herself saying yes. "Okay."

Emma grinned. "Atta girl! Annette, give her a sexy stud to start off."

Annette nodded and hurried off to go get the proper equipment.

“What made you change your mind?” Emma asked.

Ginny blushed, rubbing her finger over her bellybutton. “I was just thinking about how my boyfriend would react to it.”

Emma grinned. “I bet he’d like it. You two been dating long?”

“It will be a year next week.”

“Wow, long term. So who is he? Is he hot?”

Ginny laughed. “Incredibly. He’s got this sexy black hair that just sort of stands up everywhere so that you want to put your hands in it, tame it down, and when you touch it, it feels so soft. He’s got these incredible piercing emerald green eyes that just make me sigh whenever I look at him. He’s smart and brave and sometimes completely daft. Not to mention that he has an incredible body. I love him so much.”

Emma smiled. “He sounds hot. Is he older then you?”

Ginny nodded. “Yeah, but only by a year.”

“So, does lover boy have a name?”

“Harry Potter.”

Emma smirked. “You’re shitting me! You’re dating Harry Potter!”

Ginny nodded. “Yeah.”

“I only really know about him because of my time in Europe. Potter’s not too big here in the states. But man oh man, you bagged the hero. Good job.”

Ginny blushed. “He’s so much more then what the press make him out to be.”

Emma nodded. “They always are, babe. I’m sure he’s a great guy. He

must be if he's won your heart. Here comes Annette, are you ready for this?"

"I think so. Does it hurt?"

"For a second. Don't worry, you can squeeze my hand."

Ginny watched as Annette used a tiny needle to pierce through the skin and then she placed the silver stud in its place and Ginny let out a deep breath.

"All good, sweetie." Annette replied.

Ginny nodded. "Okay." She accepted the proper ointments and alcohol to put on it every night until it properly healed before she left with Emma.

"You don't actually need that crap," Emma replied. "I got a spell to heal it right away. Do you want?"

"Alright," Ginny replied.

Emma placed her finger around the bellybutton ring and Ginny watched in fascination as a tiny blue light appeared on her skin and then the pain was gone.

"How did you do that?"

Emma grinned. "Powers of healing. We'll work on it. We've got two more stops before we head back."

"Where are we going now?"

Emma grinned. "To get you some great rings to go in place of that stud."

Ginny laughed. "Alright."

Emma bought her ten bellybutton rings: a fox, a dragon, a moon, a sun, a musical note, a lightning bolt, a star, a dangling circle of silver

rings, a Celtic knot, and her personal favourite, a dangling silver letter G. While they were there, Emma also loaded her up on earrings, about twenty pairs of funky earrings for her to wear. Then they entered another wizarding section of the city. This one was a bit grungier and Ginny knew that she was in trouble when she was pulled into the next store.

“So I’m thinking a dragon.”

“A dragon?” Ginny asked in shock. “You want me to ... a dragon?”

Emma nodded. “Yeah, dragons mean power, wisdom, and can be a symbol of good luck. You’ve got power, you’ll grow to be more wise, and hey what girl can’t use another bout of luck?”

“But a ... a tattoo?”

Emma grinned. “Oh yeah, your man will dig it.”

“My mother is so going to kill me when I return to England.”

Emma laughed. “Hey, what mom doesn’t know won’t kill her. Besides, I’ve got the perfect place for you to put it.”

“Where?” Ginny asked, closing her eyes and wondering why she was going along with this.

Emma reached down and touched her inner right thigh. “There. I think right below your groin at the high apex area of the leg. Make the dragon face down the leg and breathing fire, like he’s protecting your um ... maiden virginity.”

Ginny laughed. “You’re so serious.”

“Haven’t you ever thought about it?”

“Do you have a tattoo?” Ginny asked.

Emma nodded. “Yeah, I’ve got a parrot tattooed on my ass.”

Ginny laughed. "Why a parrot?"

Emma grinned. "Because in case you haven't noticed, I don't shut the hell up."

Ginny laughed and looked over at the wall of possible tattoo examples. She knew that in the wizarding world, tattoos didn't hurt as much but they could still be painful. She ran her hand along her inner thigh and thought about the dragon. The dragon was a powerful symbol and it did reflect on her own personality quite a bit. And it also could symbolize how in her first year, Harry had rescued the damsel in distress from the fire-breathing dragon – or basilisk but who was really counting? And Harry had fought a dragon in his fourth year. It all connected. Her powers to her personality, her to Harry. It was powerful image. She looked down at her thigh again and tried to picture the dragon there, breathing fire, just a little one there on her thigh, something she could hide by covering it with her hand. Before she fully thought of what she was saying, she spoke.

"I want a Hungarian Horntail."

Emma grinned. "Atta girl!"

Ginny laughed. She was getting a tattoo and she felt completely pleased with herself.

It only took half an hour for the witch to put the tattoo on. It was finished. Ginny now had a dark green and black Hungarian Horntail dragon about the size of a pocket watch on her right inner thigh right below the groin. The dragon was breathing fire in reds, golds, and oranges in a small stream pointing down her leg. The fire was only about as long as her thumb. Emma had been right; it looked like he was protecting her. The witch used a spell to make the tattoo have sheen to it and before they left, Emma used her healing spell to take the redness and the bit of pain away. Ginny got dressed and they headed out.

"I can't believe that I just got a tattoo."

Emma laughed. "Well, believe it. It looks hot! I'd say that when your

man sees it ... hmm, it will be a sight worth seeing.”

Ginny grinned. “Do you think he’ll like it?”

Emma smiled. “Oh, trust me ... I think he’ll like it. Come on; let’s go grab some pizza before we head back. We’ve got to hang up all of your new stuff before we crash for the night. ‘Cause tomorrow, babe, we start with the magic.”

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## **Chapter 55: Frightening Knowledge**

**Author's Notes:** plz review!!

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### **Chapter LV – Frightening Knowledge**

Ginny woke up the next morning and had to blink a few times before she remembered where she was. The satin sheets felt soft against her skin as she rolled over. The clock read ten a.m. She was surprised that she had slept so long and she quickly slipped out of bed. That was when she remembered everything that had happened the day before. She slid up the tank top that she was wearing to touch the bellybutton ring and grinned. She liked it. She had always wanted one, sort of, but her mum had been so against it. Ginny grinned; she could and would hide it from her. After all, that would be a matter of her own safety. Molly would flip out if she saw the ring on her ‘baby’ girl. Then she remembered the tattoo and blushed. She couldn’t believe that she had actually gone through with the tattoo. She was glad that she had though, it made her feel grown up already. And she knew deep down that if she hadn’t wanted the tattoo, she wouldn’t have gotten one.

She slipped into the adjoining bathroom and quickly showered before she changed into a pair of old jeans and a tank top. She couldn’t even bring herself to choose an outfit from the insane amount that she had received the day before. She went into the common room

and found Emma sprawled out on the floor flipping through some heavy volumes of books that looked hundreds of years old.

“What are those about?” She asked.

Emma grinned. “Magic. Did you sleep alright? I didn’t want to wake you up too early because I knew that your system would be whacked from the time change.”

Ginny nodded. “Yeah, I slept well. Are we going to start my lessons today?”

Emma nodded. “Sort of, first we need to talk. Take a seat. Are you hungry or anything?”

“I am a little hungry.” Ginny admitted as her stomach rumbled.

Emma smiled. “Alright, you sit here and I’ll go grab you some breakfast. Be back in a flash.”

Ginny nodded as she watched Emma leave the room. Her eyes strayed to the covers of the large volumes that were stacked on the ground. They were a mixture of works: *Healing Through Touch*; *Mind Reading and Psychic Powers*; *Astral Projection: Is it Possible?*; *Telepathy – Learning in Ten Easy Steps*; *Mystic Foresight and the Telling of Prophecies*; and *How to Make Magical Properties* were only a few of the books listed. She looked up when Emma came back into the room.

“That was fast.”

Emma shrugged. “I’m not much of a cook. I just grabbed you some Coco Puffs.”

“Coco Puffs?” Ginny asked.

Emma nodded. “Cereal. They’re delicious, honest.”

Ginny shrugged and began to make her way through the bowl. They were actually quite good and anything chocolate for breakfast worked



well for her. "They are good. So, you said that you're not much of a cook?"

Emma shook her head. "I've been trying to teach myself but I'm coming up with nothing."

Ginny laughed. "I can teach you if you want. I take after my mum when it comes to cooking."

She grinned. "That sounds great, an exchange of skills eh? Awesome, we'll do that then. I'll teach you how to harness your magic and you can teach me how to cook."

"Sounds good. Alright, so everything in those volumes, can I do that?"

"I don't know." She replied truthfully. "I can do some of it, but every empath has their own powers. Before I can really start teaching you anything we have to explore your powers. But first, we're going to talk a bit. What do you know about being an empath?"

Ginny shrugged. "Not too much. I really only know what Bill and Charlie told me. Like how I can sense and feel certain emotions in people. I do it sub-consciously and I don't realize it. I also feel things very strongly when I'm with Harry, especially when he kisses or touches me but I don't know if that has anything to do with my powers."

Emma smiled. "It has everything and nothing to do with your powers. I bet that you're still curious about that incredible shopping spree we did yesterday." When Ginny nodded she continued. "You're going to change, Ginevra; you're going to change in ways that you never thought about. You're going to be fifteen in a few days and that is when the empath powers really take root, which is why I told Bill that if you wanted to learn you had to come to me now. What did I say to you yesterday?"

Ginny thought for a moment and then she blushed. "That I um ... that I had great breasts."

Emma laughed. "True and you do, they will get bigger of course as

you're not done growing, but what else did I say?"

"I don't know."

"Because I didn't tell you anything. I took you on this whirlwind of a trip and I never told you why. That's what I'm going to start off with. That starts with your body." Emma explained.

"My body?"

Emma nodded. "You are growing up, as I'm sure you've noticed. You've got delicate curves forming in all of the right places but you're still not a woman. By the end of your lessons with me, you're going to be a woman."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Empaths mature and develop in a different way than other people. For women, we don't develop slowly; it comes between our fifteenth and sixteenth year. Your features will soften, curves will develop and your breasts will most likely double in size. Empaths are known to be physically striking. It is one of those things that makes people look at us, point us out from a crowd. They are drawn to us because of our power, thus we can sense and channel the emotion that they feel when they are around us. Once we tap into that power source you're going to change at an incredible rate. I need for you to be prepared for the changes that you will be going through."

Ginny stared at Emma in surprise. "But how? I mean, how will all of this happen so fast? How are you so sure that it will happen?"

Emma smiled. "Because I know. It's happened to every known empath. It will be painful because the growth comes on so quickly and it will be frustrating and the stronger your magic gets, the faster the growth spurt will come on."

"But you just bought me all of those great clothes? What was the point if I'm only going to grow out of them?"

Emma grinned. "Please, Ginevra, I'm a fashion guru. I know so many spells at altering sizes so that they still fit or increasing them. We will fix your clothes when the time comes. That will hardly be a problem."

Ginny nodded. "So, what else will happen besides the growing up quickly?"

"You're going to learn what you're capable of. But because of the growth spurts and the magical powers, we also have to build up the strength in your body. We're going to start running every day. It's a habit that I already do regularly but it's good for your legs and for your body and will make the pain a little less intense when it comes to the huge growth spurt. We'll start slowly in the magic and see where you are and then we'll take it from there." Emma explained.

"When does this ... I mean, this growing thing start?" Ginny asked.

"It's started already, but once we start really using your magic and expanding it towards your potential, it will increase drastically in its rate. Do you understand?"

Ginny nodded as she finished the last bit of her cereal. "Yes."

"Good, there's something else as well. You're senses will increase almost five times."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Like your senses, you will feel things more intensely than most people. Emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, pleasure, arousal, pain – you will feel these emotions, these senses stronger than others. Your senses will increase along with your growing power. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

Emma smiled. "Good. Alright, let's get started then. I want to test you on a few things. The skills and so forth and see just how powerful you are at the moment without any training."

Ginny nodded. "Alright, where do we start?"

Emma grinned and reached out towards Ginny. "I want you to hold my hand, like we did yesterday when I introduced myself?"

Ginny nodded and held her hand out towards Emma, who grasped it in her own. It was just like the day before, a blue spark flew from their joined hands but this time it sizzled between them. The energy crackled and Ginny could feel the wonder, the excitement, and the power flow through her and it wasn't even all hers.

"Do you feel it, Ginny? Do you know what you're feeling?" Emma asked as the sparks got larger.

"Yes. I'm feeling your power mixing with mine and getting stronger and I feel your emotions. It's like we're ..."

"Drawing each other's moods in." Emma replied. "Empaths will always interact like that. The power will be so strong because both of us have the empathic ability to draw on moods and emotions, to sense what others are feeling. We do it naturally. Most of the time we don't even realize we're doing it until an emotion enters us that is unusual or completely different from what we had been feeling."

"It's like, I can feel my own power and my own potential but at the same time I don't know if it's only mine." Ginny explained.

Emma grinned. "Now let go." They unclasped their hands. "Now what do you feel?"

"The same thing."

Emma nodded. "Do you know why?"

Ginny shook her head. "No."

"Because I know how to hold myself back for a bit when it comes to sensing and I let you in and I let myself in for a moment, but then I withdrew, leaving you with everything that I felt about your powers. That means that you're a very powerful witch, Ginevra, and I think

that the best way to start anything is for you to do some background reading.”

Ginny sighed. “Homework?”

Emma laughed. “I’m afraid so. I want you to read these volumes here so you have an idea of what these abilities are and how to use them. From there I guess we’ll see what you’re capable of.”

Ginny nodded. “Alright, that sounds good to me.”

Emma grinned. “Good. Now go change into some more comfortable clothes, we’ve got some running to do.”

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Bill sat in his London flat, flipping through the mail that the owl had brought him. He hadn’t been able to stop thinking about Ginny all night. He really hoped that he had made the right decision in convincing her to go on this trip. He knew it was right in the sense that she needed to learn more about her powers but he just hoped that he had made the right decision.

He leaned back on the chesterfield, putting his feet up on the table just as a soft knock sounded on his door. He got up and pulled it open, grinning when he saw the beautiful silvery blonde there.

“Good morning, Beautiful.”

Fleur smiled at him. “Good morning.” She stood on her toes and kissed him softly as he tugged her into his flat. “I thought I would come over zis morning.”

“I’m glad you did. We sent Ginny off last night to study with Emma.”

Fleur nodded as she took a seat on the chesterfield next to Bill. His arm draped around her and she grinned. “You’re worried about ‘er.”

Bill nodded. “Yeah, I am. I know it’s good for her and I know that it was my idea to send her off there. Charlie agreed with me and Emma

wanted her in New York, in a new environment to learn. But, I guess, maybe I just miss her.”

Fleur smiled. “She iz your sister.”

“She’s more than that. Ginny is ... she’s my best friend. I remember when Mum and Dad brought her home. I was completely in love with her. I had just turned thirteen only a few months before but I was completely taken with that baby girl. I didn’t want to go back to school. I wanted to stay home and just hold her all the time.” He grinned to himself as he remembered. “I remember coming home at Christmas and just sneaking into her room at night, kneeling down beside the crib and just watching her sleep. She used to hold onto my finger. She was special. Everyone knew it, from the beginning. Ginny was the first girl to be born to a Weasley in seven generations. Even Dad was completely in love with her. She’s still his little princess.”

Fleur laughed. “I theenk all fathers ‘ave zare leetle princesses.”

“Yeah, I think so. She’s my Firefly. I used to write letters home to her all the time, once she was about six. I told her everything, I still do. I know she’s powerful and I know that going out to New York and learning will benefit her quite a bit. But, I just miss her.”

Fleur smiled and reached up to kiss him softly. “I’m sure she misses you, too. But you can write to ‘er. Soon she will be ‘ome and eet will be good again, n’est pas?”

“Yeah. What would I do without you?”

“I do not know.”

Bill grinned and he kissed her softly, linking his fingers with hers. “I’m in love with you, Fleur, and it kind of scares me.”

Fleur’s blue eyes met his brown ones and she nodded. “I know za feeling. You are so different zen other men.”

“Why? Because I’m not affected by your Veela charms?”

She laughed. "Non, because you treat me good. From za beginning, you did."

Bill smiled. "Well, I only did what was right."

Fleur kissed him. "Je t'aime."

"My French sucks."

Fleur smiled. "My Eenglish iz not much better. But eet means, I love you."

"Do you remember the day we met, after that tournament?"

She nodded. "As eef eet was yesterday."

*Bill didn't looked up when he heard the soft knock on his office door. "Come in, I'll be with you in a minute." He finished signing the papers in front of him and it was only when he looked up that his eyes met the bright gorgeous blue ones of the girl from the Tri-Wizard Tournament. "Hello."*

*Fleur extended her hand, a bright smile on her face. "Ello, j'mappelle Fleur Delacour. I am 'ere to be a teller for zis bank."*

*Bill nodded, leaning back in his chair. "Bill Weasley. We met, briefly, before the third task."*

*Fleur's face brightened. "Oui, oui! You were with 'Arry Potter!"*

*Bill grinned. "Yeah, he's a friend of the family. So, you are moving here to London to work?"*

*Fleur nodded. "I want to eemprove my Eenglish and to work 'ere at zis bank. The goblin, Gortock 'ired me. 'E said zat you were za man to talk to about my position."*

*Bill nodded. "I am. You'll have to give me a few minutes here to get organized. It's my first week. I just transferred over from Egypt."*

*"You were za curse breaker, n'est pas?"*

*"Yes, I was. I still am, but with the escalating danger I decided to move back home."*

*"I understand. Mama and Papa, zey did not want me to come 'ere. But after what 'appened in za tournament ... Cedric Diggory was a nice boy, 'e was always kind to me. I want to 'elp as much as I can." Fleur explained. "Gortock told me zat I could start as a teller but since my skills are 'igh in certain areas related to curses zat I might be able to 'elp you."*

*Bill smiled. "Sure, I'll see what I can do." He found the papers he was looking for and pulled them out. "You're part Veela aren't you?"*

*Fleur looked angry for a moment but she quickly masked it. "Oui, my grandmuzzer was one."*

*Bill nodded. "Sorry, I didn't mean to make you angry. It's just the attraction ... I'm sure you know."*

*She nodded, a little stiffly.*

*He grinned. "I just wanted to know first, because I was thinking about asking you out to dinner tonight. I wanted you to know that I was asking you because you're beautiful and I think that we might have quite a bit in common. I'm asking you of my own free will."*

*Fleur smiled. "Trust me, I can tell za difference, Bill. I would love to go to dinner with you."*

*Bill grinned. When she stood up, he walked around the desk to hand her the papers, their fingers brushing slightly and making both of them tingle in anticipation. "Good, as long as we're clear. Oh, and Fleur?"*

*"Oui?"*

*"If you want help in improving your English, let me know."*



*Fleur smiled, flipping her silvery blonde mane of hair over her shoulder. "I will keep eet in mind."*

*Bill watched her walk out of the room, grinning. It looked like moving back to London had been a better idea than he had first thought.*

"Iz my Eenglish getting better?" Fleur asked, pulling Bill out of the memory.

Bill grinned. "Yes, though you still make zed sounds instead of th and you drop your h's, but your doing good. I love you, Fleur."

Fleur smiled. "I love you, too."

Bill brought his lips to hers, wondering not for the first time what he would do if she ever walked out of his life.

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Fred stepped into the small kitchen in his and George's flat, yawning as he turned the coffee pot on. He was feeling a bit miserable since his dream. Once again, he had woken up aching for the one person who wasn't there.

George yawned as he stepped into the kitchen. "Morning. How do you think Gin's doing?"

Fred shrugged. "I'm sure she's having fun. I hope she causes a bit of trouble while she's there."

George grinned. "Or does something wild anyway. She always was the one most like us."

"Scary thought, really."

"You're thinking about her again." George stated simply. It wasn't a question. He knew exactly what was on his brother's mind as if it was his own.

Fred shrugged. "Did I ever really stop?"

“You’re the one that broke up with her.”

“Well, we were leaving, I mean, how could we have carried on a relationship? Where was it even going?” Fred demanded. “Her dad made it perfectly clear that I wasn’t right for her.”

George sighed. “Lina didn’t care, Fred. Look, why don’t you take the day off, go do something. I’ll hold the shop.”

Fred just nodded. “Alright, that sounds good.”

George watched his brother leave the room and he sighed. Fred wasn’t the only one with regrets on his mind.

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Harry came downstairs the next morning stifling a yawn. He had slept surprisingly well the night before but he figured that it had a lot to do with the fact that he had worked himself into exhaustion in the training session. He and James had lifted weights, did some running, and then physically fought each other before James went up to bed and Harry used a punching bag for the rest of the evening. He stepped into the kitchen and his smile faded when he saw the solemn looks on the faces of James, Sirius, and Lexy.

“What happened?”

James sighed. “Voldemort finally decided to really start off his parade.”

Harry sat down at the table and took the newspaper from his father and began to read:

## **HE WHO MUST NOT BE NAMED STRIKES AGAIN!**

Written by: *Nicole Harris*

*He Who Must Not Be Named is back and has already started causing the chaos around the wizarding community. Last night, You-Know-Who himself and a group of a dozen Death Eaters entered into the*

*neighbourhood of Little Crescent. It looks like two Death Eaters were assigned to a house. The entire families of six homes were massacred in their beds! Muggles are in an uproar over it and the muggle minister is trying to figure out an explanation as to what has happened.*

*Six men were beheaded and castrated; their heads hung as trophies over the front door of each home. There were ten male children in the proximity and they were all beat to death before being tortured with what looks to be the Cruciatus Curse. The sickness of it as has left nearby residents and the entire Kingdom horrified. But it seems that the female participants got the worse end of the bargain.*

*Six women were brutally raped and have bite marks all over their bodies. This leaves the Magical Law Enforcement to think that vampires may have played roles in this massacre. Most vampires would not injure a human being to that extent but tend to feed briefly and let them live, or kill them quickly. It seems that He Who Must Not Be Named has adopted the most ferocious vampires to fight for his side. The female children of the neighbourhood were raped as well and from what can be seen from the carnage, tortured and sliced into pieces. Muggle police officers have called it the most sickening thing they've seen in almost sixteen years. The wizarding world knows that it's because You-Know-Who has taken it upon himself to pick up where he left off sixteen years ago.*

*There was one survivor in this hellish massacre, a four-year-old girl named Abby Macintyre. The girl only happened to survive because she hid herself in the kitchen cupboard. Officer Jack Peterson discovered her when they were searching the house. Abby heard the screams from the neighbouring houses and was told by her father to hide. She was never found by any of the killers. Her Aunt Rose plans to take full custody of her after the tragedy that has befallen these families. Abby is the miracle of it all.*

*Aurors are searching for He Who Must Not Be Named and his followers but they are afraid that nothing will turn up. He has returned and seems to be just as strong as ever. The massacre that the town of Cornwall has experienced will always be remembered.*

Harry closed his eyes as he read the ending of the article. "One little girl survived?"

James nodded. "Disgusting, isn't it? To think that human beings could do that to one another. There's more as well, on the second page."

Sirius nodded. "Not as bad, but trust me, just as horrible."

Lexy reached over to clutch Sirius' hand in hers and she leaned closer to cuddle. "Terribly horrible."

Sirius pulled her up into his lap and cradled her close. "I won't let anything happen to you, baby." He kissed her softly and she grinned.

"But those poor people." Lexy shuddered and stayed wrapped comfortably in her husband's arms.

James nodded. "I think that you should read it, Harry, you need to know what's going on."

Harry nodded as he turned the page to the article that James pointed out and he began to read:

## **DEATH EATERS TORTURE MUGGLES!**

Written by: *Jerry Horton*

*A group of what is believed to be around twenty Death Eaters including Alecto Carrow, Amycus Carrow, Avery Senior, Avery Junior, Rabastan Lestrangle, Walden Macnair, and Augustus Rookwood are only a few of the known Death Eaters who participated. They seemed to have crashed a wedding ceremony in Sheffield and tortured the guests as well as the bride and groom for sport. Luckily, no one was killed in the incident, but four of the guests were tortured to such extremities that they have been forced to enter the mental ward at the nearby muggle hospital.*

*The Cruciatus Curse seems to be the favourite of the torture devices but witnesses say that people were hung upside down and beat within an inch of their lives; limbs pulled from bodies; and other forms of torture that are still being taken from the witnesses of this event.*

*Memory charms have been severely used on the muggle population. It seems that You-Know-Who is prepared to let chaos reign again on the world.*

“No one was killed in this one,” Harry murmured softly.

Lexy nodded. “But at a wedding?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah. Why now? The summer has been going by almost completely uneventful and then this?”

James shook his head. “I don’t know for sure, but I suspect it’s the article in the bottom left corner of the front page.”

Harry quickly flipped back to the front page of the paper and down to the article written there and he groaned out loud when he read the title.

## **DEATH EATERS ESCAPE AZKABAN PRISON:**

Written by: *Veronica Wilder*

*He Who Must Not Be Named has done it again! He has somehow managed to help his followers return to him from under the Ministry of Magic’s nose! Trenton Traverse, Augustus Rookwood, Damien Nott, Jack Mulciber, Lucius Malfoy, Walden Macnair, Doreen Angleson, Hank Jugson, Lawrence Gibbon, Antonin Dolohov, Victor Crabbe, Gordon Goyle, John Avery, Ludmilla Kristopherson, and Alecko and Amycus Carrow are the names of the sixteen Death Eaters who escaped captivity three weeks ago.*

*Malfoy, Crabbe, Goyle, Nott, Mulciber, Rookwood, Avery, and Dolohov were imprisoned at the end of the June for a battle at the Department of Mysteries in the Ministry of Magic itself involving several civilians including Albus Dumbledore and Harry Potter. They escaped earlier in the summer and were free for a few weeks before being imprisoned again. The great escape of such a large number of dangerous followers only causes the massacre at Cornwall and the recent disaster in Sheffield to put people on more alert.*

*To read more on the Death Eaters who escaped and their crimes turn*

*to page 17. The missing Malfoy heir is another thing to look into, with Lucius Malfoy, a known Death Eater on the loose, the question becomes, where is his son? Turn to page 19 for details.*

“Great! Just bloody great!” Harry exclaimed.

“Exactly our point, Harry,” Sirius replied.

Harry tossed the paper down on the table and ran his fingers through his hair. “So in one day, the *Daily Prophet* has managed to inform the public that not only does Voldemort have loyal and criminally insane Death Eaters working for him but vampires as well? Where does that leave us?”

James sighed. “No where. There’s nothing that we can do about this. That’s what makes it so hard. We have no idea where he will strike next because he doesn’t leave a pattern. He strikes where he wants whenever he wants and he leaves death and destruction in his path. I remember before you were born, Harry, news like this ...”

“It was a normal part of every day,” Sirius replied. “I remember. It doesn’t make it any easier to read or any easier to accept but it makes you realize where your limits are in stopping him. We can’t stop Voldemort from doing this.”

“So what do we do?” Harry asked.

“We wait and see what the Order has to say and from there we see what we can do. It may not be much but its better then doing nothing at all.” James replied.

Sirius nodded. “Exactly.”

Harry was quiet for a few minutes before he nodded. “I guess so.”

“Here, your Hogwarts letter arrived, later then usual but Dumbledore’s been a little busy.” James replied as he tossed the letter at Harry. “I think your O.W.L. grades might finally be in there too. You were supposed to get that eons ago! But since O.W.L. grades came from the ministry I guess I can see why it took a while for them to be

processed.”

Harry grinned as he opened the envelope and began to read out loud:

**Dear Mr. Potter,**

**We are pleased to inform you that you have achieved ten O.W.L.s. Your marks are listed below:**

**Please note the passing and failing grading system use for O.W.L.s (Ordinary Wizing Levels):**

**Grades:**

***Outstanding***

***Exceeds Expectations***

***Acceptable***

***Poor***

***Dreadful***

***Troll***

**Passing Grades:**

***O++ (95-100%);***

***O+ (90-94.9%);***

***O (85-89.9%);***

***O- (80-84.9%);***

***E+ (75-79.9%);***

***E (70-74.9%);***

***E- (65-69.9%);***

***A+ (60-64.9%);***

***A (55-59.9%);***

***A- (50-54.9%);***

**Failing Grades:**

***P+ (40-49.9%);***

***D+ (30-39.9%);***

***T (0-29.9%)***

**Ordinary Wizing Levels Final Grades for June 1995:**

**Potter, Harry James**

***Ancient Runes: O***

***Astronomy: O-***

***Care of Magical Creatures: O+***

***Charms: O+***

***Defence Against the Dark Arts: O++***

***Divination: A+***

***Herbology: E+***

***History of Magic: E***

***Potions: O-***

***Transfiguration: O++***

**Grade Average: O- (84.6%)**

**Congratulations!**

**Sincerely ,  
Griselda Marchbanks**

“Wow, I didn’t fail anything, not even Divination.” Harry replied with a shocked expression.

James laughed. “Those grades are incredible! Congratulations!”

Sirius nodded. “Really? Well ... you must have got your brains from Lily-Love because Prongs here couldn’t have pulled off grades like that in a million years!”

“Hey! I did alright,” James protested. “Not as many Os and more into the Es and As, but I did alright!”

Harry laughed. “Thanks.” He opened the Hogwarts letter next. There was the usual letter telling him where to get on the Hogwarts express and something heavy fell out of the envelope. Harry lifted it up and flipped it over, his grin widening when he recognized the head of a Gryffindor lion in gold and red with a large C on it.

“I’m captain of the Quidditch team!”



James laughed. "Well, that's not surprising! Congratulations!"

Sirius nodded. "Like father, like son, I suppose. Why are you so surprised?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know! But yes, I'm captain!"

Lexy laughed. "Congratulations, Harry."

He nodded and turned to his supply list:

**Dear Mr. Potter,**

**The following is the list of books you will need for your sixth year at school:**

**Ancient Runes:**

***Advanced Rune Translation* by Daphne Jordanova**

***A Guide to Medieval Sorcery* by Godric Addams**

***Spellman's Syllabary* by Charles Stone**

**Astronomy:**

***The Magical Outpost in the Sky* by Akbar Montello**

**Care of Magical Creatures:**

***The Monster Book of Monsters Part II* by Phil Gaspar**

**Charms:**

***Achievements in Charming* by Lucas Diefenbaker**

***An Anthology of Eighteenth Century Charms* by Lucas Diefenbaker**

***Quintessence: A Quest* by Miranda Goshawk**

***The Standard Book of Spells Grade Six* by Miranda Goshawk**

**Defence Against the Dark Arts:**

***A Compendium of Common Curses and Their Counter-Actions* by Vincent Lamb**

***The Dark Arts Outsmarted* by Justinian Romero**

***Practical Defensive Magic and Its Uses Against the Dark Arts* by Quentin Trimble**

***The Rise and Fall of the Dark Arts* by Justinian Romero**  
***Self-Defensive Spellwork* by Randolph Harris**

**Divination:**

***Predicting the Unpredictable: Insulate Yourself Against Shocks***  
**by Cassandra Vablatsky**

**Herbology:**

***Magical Water Plants of the Mediterranean* by Yuri Romanov**

**History of Magic:**

***Hogwarts: A History* by Veronica Ravenclaw**

***Modern Magical History* by Bathilda Bagshot**

***Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century* by Aberforth  
Ferguson**

***Great Wizards of the Twentieth Century* by Aberforth Ferguson**

**Potions:**

***Advanced Potion-Making* by Libatius Borage**

***Asiatic Anti-Venoms* by David Rosenberg**

**Transfiguration:**

***Guide to Advanced Transfiguration* by Emeric Switch**

***Theories of Transubstantial Transfiguration* by Emeric Switch**

**We have split the textbooks according to classes because sixth year is the year used to filter out the classes that you no longer wish to participate in because of career options. We would ask that you drop at least 2 courses from your load if you wish but no more than two is allowed. Please send a letter back with the classes that you do not wish to take.**

**Sincerely,  
Professor Minerva McGonagall  
(Head of Gryffindor House)**

**"I need a lot of books this year," Harry exclaimed as he looked over his list again. "And I get to drop two classes."**

**James grinned. "Let me guess, Divination and Astronomy."**

Harry laughed. "Good guess and yeah I am." He quickly scrawled a response to McGonagall asking to be removed from those classes and he sent it along with James' old owl Potts before he turned back to the letter. "But even getting rid of those two classes, I still need ... twenty-two textbooks!"

Sirius grinned. "I assigned a lot of books but they're not too expensive, some of them are more like handbooks."

Lexy nodded. "Well, books get pricy the higher up you go in classes, it's the way it works."

Harry shrugged. "I'll be fine, that's just a lot of work coming up."

James nodded. "Oh yeah. Sixth and seventh year, it was insane on the workload."

"Great."

Sirius laughed. "Yeah, well listen, Lex and I have to head on down to Hogwarts to get our new home ready and set up but we'll be back later on."

"Bye," Harry replied as he watched them leave before he turned to James. "Can we go start grabbing this stuff from Diagon Alley today?"

James nodded. "I was just going to mention that. Go get dressed and we'll go."

Harry nodded before he hurried upstairs to shower and change. He met James in the entrance way half an hour later and they flooed into the Diagon Alley. They stopped at Gringotts first to take out some money and then they began to load up on the supplies of books and ink and quills and potions ingredients. James used a shrinking charm and then a feather-light charm to make their packages a bit smaller.

"Harry, want to go grab some lunch somewhere in muggle London?" James suggested after they had spent the morning loading up.

Harry was just about to comment when he heard someone call his name. He turned at the sound of the voice and gasped when the figure fell to his knees in front of him. His hair was messy and his clothes were a bit torn and he looked utterly desperate.

“What do you want?” Harry asked, glancing up and down at the mess in front of him.

“I need your help.”

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## Chapter 56: An Unlikely Alliance

**Author's Notes:** plz review!!

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### Chapter LVI – An Unlikely Alliance

“You want my help?” Harry asked in shock. “Okay, what kind of spell are you under?”

“I’m serious. Do you think that I would come to you if I wasn’t desperate? I’m practically in muggle London for Merlin’s sake! What the hell do you take me for?”

Harry shrugged. “Doesn’t mean anything to me.” He looked over at James who was staring at the two of them in amusement. “What about you, Da?”

James shrugged. “Well, since I know what a jerk this git’s father is I’m not so sure about giving him the benefit of the doubt myself.”

“Please, will you just listen to me? I need to talk to you.”

Harry sighed and looked at his father. James nodded and pointed his wand at Malfoy, using a spell to change his appearance. Malfoy winced and closed his eyes as soon as the wand turned in his

direction.

“Open your eyes, Draco; we were just changing your appearance, now come on. I don’t think that it would be good for any of us if you were seen with us.” Harry replied as he rolled his eyes.

James and Harry led Malfoy over to a small muggle café where they sat down and ordered drinks in the far back corner. James leaned back in his chair then. “So, are you going to talk about what you need to talk about?”

Malfoy gulped. “Sir, do you um ... do you think that I could talk to Pot-Harry alone for a minute?”

James looked over at Harry and Harry nodded. “Fine. I’m going to go browse a few of the shops. Harry, you know how to get a hold of me if needed.” He glanced over at Malfoy then. “If this is a trap of any kind, I will personally hunt you down and kill you. Understood?”

Malfoy nodded. “Yes.”

James left the restaurant but Harry knew that he hadn’t gone far and he had seen the small flashes of the elementals that his father had left behind. He had been looking for them because he knew James’ mind.

“Alright, Draco, why do you need my help? And more importantly, why should I help you?”

Draco sighed. “Because you’re my only hope.”

Harry snorted. “And I’m supposed to believe that? What about all your friends? And not to mention Voldemort himself?” Malfoy winced under the name and Harry rolled his eyes. “What do you want? More importantly, according to the *Daily Prophet*, you’ve been missing for what three weeks now?”

“I want ... I want to get away from the Dark Lord.” Malfoy replied softly.

“Excuse me?”

Draco rolled his eyes. “Oh, you heard me, Potter! Alright! My father has returned home.”

“Yeah I saw the article. He escaped from Azkaban Prison, he didn’t *return home*.”

“Listen, when he returned he brought my Aunt Bella and the Dark Lord along with him. I turned sixteen in May. Apparently, that’s the appropriate age for me to follow in my father’s footsteps.”

“Become a Death Eater?” Harry asked.

Draco nodded. “Yeah. That’s the last thing that I want.”

“Why? Your father’s a Death Eater? Your mother is probably one too and probably every relative in your family. Why don’t you want to be one?”

Draco closed his eyes and let out a deep breath, his eyes darting back and forth as if he was looking to be hauled off for sitting there and talking with Harry. “Because I’m weak, alright! I’m not brave and all noble like you are, Potter! I’m nothing in that sense and I sure as hell don’t have the stomach to handle doing anything like they did in Cornwall or Sheffield. Why do you think I ran away? If I go home now ... I heard my options and they’re not good/”

Harry nodded. He understood that sense and he couldn’t imagine any human being doing that. He wanted to trust Draco but at the same time he couldn’t help but be suspicious of him so he set his mind focus on using Legilimency. He still wasn’t an expert at using the mind probing tool but he could use it well enough on those who weren’t prepared and left their minds open. To his good fortune, Draco’s mind was open and it only proved to Harry that he wasn’t lying. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that realization. “So what do you want me to do?”

“Help me escape.”

“Escape?”

Draco nodded. “From being a Death Eater. You see, three weeks ago, when Father, Aunt Bella, and the Dark Lord appeared they told me that I was to be assigned into their inner circle. The Dark Lord saw that I was afraid and unsure of how to respond and he informed everyone that I had exactly one week to think things over. When I decided that I was ready to become his true loyal follower then we would start the initiation ceremony and if I decided I wasn’t ...”

“He would kill you,” Harry murmured.

“Exactly.”

“What do your parents have to say about this?”

Draco snorted. “What do you think? Father told me that I was to be a Death Eater or he would personally kill me. Mother said something along the lines of that if I didn’t follow in his footsteps she would disown me and that I wouldn’t be any son of hers. I ran that night.”

Harry nodded. “So why come to me? I mean, no offence, but we’ve never gotten along. We’re hardly the best of friends.”

“I know and my first reaction would be to go to Snape but he’s a Death Eater so that doesn’t help me out. You knew that, right?”

“Yeah, I did.”

“Well, then I thought about going to Dumbledore but I couldn’t because ... they would know. The Dark Lord and my parents would know if I went to Dumbledore. I can’t explain it, I just, I knew that they would know. You were the last resort.”

Harry grinned. “Good to know.”

Draco sighed. “Listen Potter ... Harry, I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t important. It’s a matter of life and death. Or more so the story of my death. If I agree to become a Death Eater I’m not going to be able to withstand the tasks I’m assigned so I’ll be killed and if I refuse, then

I'll be killed. I need your help. Harry, I ... I don't want to die."

Harry nodded. "I understand what you're asking but have you thought about what this will entail?"

"What do you mean?" Draco asked.

"You're going to have to change your entire lifestyle. If I help you, you're never going to be able to return to Malfoy Manor until Voldemort is gone and your parents either come back to their senses or they die. If I help you, you're going to have some fun at school in Slytherin, a house full of future, if not Death Eaters. If I help you, there's no turning back. Do you understand?" Harry explained.

Draco nodded. "Yes, I understand it all. It's the only way. I've been living in alleyways with filthy homeless muggles for weeks now, trust me, I've made my choice."

Harry nodded. "Alright, then I'm going to help you."

"You-really?"

"Yeah, I will, but on one condition."

"Anything, Potter, I'll owe you my life for this one!" Draco replied with such sincerity that it shocked Harry for a moment.

"I talked to my godfather briefly about it as he is taking over the DADA post for the year and we're thinking about making the DA an official club with him helping me. I'd like for you to join and to learn how to fight better."

Draco looked surprised. "That's it? Sure I'll do that, hell I sort of wanted to last year."

It was Harry's turn to look surprised now. "Really?"

Draco nodded. "Yeah. After the exams and everything I heard Nott and Zabini talking about how great it had been and well ... yeah, I'll join the DA. Is that it?"



Harry shook his head. "No, by joining the DA you are thoroughly renouncing Voldemort and basically agreeing to fight on our side in the war. On the side of Dumbledore and on the side of wanting to see Voldemort vanquished forever. Can you handle that?"

"Yeah I can handle that. I can fight in a war knowing that I was doing something worthwhile but I couldn't fight in a war knowing that I was killing innocent people for the sake of sport. I know I've been a jerk and I know that you have every right to refuse me and throw my ass outside but I ... I'm sorry for everything and I really need your help. I want to be on the good side, Harry; I want to fight against the Dar – V-V-Voldemort."

Hearing Malfoy fumble through Voldemort's real name made him smile. "Alright then. Where are all of your clothes and school supplies and all that jazz?"

"At home in the manor."

Harry nodded. "That's what I was afraid of. Okay, is it all in your bedroom?"

"Yes ... Potter, what does this have to do with anything?"

"If you want my help, then you won't have to return to your house at all. I've got a way for the items to be removed quickly and efficiently and transported to a new place for you. Understand?"

"Yeah I got it."

Harry reached into his pocket for the mirror and pulled it out. "Da?" When James' face appeared he grinned. "You can come back now; we've just managed to snag a new ally."

James nodded. "Be right there."

Harry slipped the mirror back into his pocket as Draco stared at it in shock. "What was that?"

"A communication mirror. Now right now, you should be pretty safe since Da was smart enough to change your appearance. No one is going to see you under the black hair and brown eyes." Harry explained.

Draco nodded. "Okay, thanks Harry."

"Don't thank me yet, just because you've convinced me doesn't mean everyone else will be so forgiving." Harry explained. He nodded at James when he took a seat at their table. "Hi Da."

"So what's going on, Harry?" James asked.

"Well, in a nutshell, Draco is supposed to be involved in a ceremony that makes him a Death Eater. He doesn't want to be so he will be killed, hence the running away. He wants to fight against Voldemort. But he can't go back home." Harry explained.

James nodded. "And you believe him?"

"Yeah I do and well," he blushed. "I used Legilimency on him."

James laughed. "Figures. Alright, let's go then."

They stood up and James began to lead the way out of the café after leaving money on the table. Draco leaned over to whisper to Harry.

"He just agreed to help, like that?"

Harry nodded. "Well, he trusts me."

"Wow." Draco murmured. He didn't say another word after that.

The three of them flooed straight to Hogsmeade and from there they walked to Hogwarts. When they arrived at the gates, James turned to look at them.

"Alright, first stop in this mess is Dumbledore. We need to talk to him and figure things out. Is that alright with you, Draco?" James asked.

Draco nodded. "Yeah, I just ... I didn't want to go to Dumbledore before. I don't know why, I just felt like if I went to him, they would know."

"Don't worry about it. You'll be safe now."

They went into the castle and were just turning the corner to Dumbledore's office when they heard a moan. James snorted in suppressed laughter when they found Sirius holding Lexy back against the hall wall and kissing her senseless.

"Sirius, stop, we're in the hallway." Lexy lightly protested as he kissed her neck.

He grinned. "Uh-huh, surrounded by students in the middle of August. You want it, Lex."

She laughed and then she spotted James, Harry, and Draco. "See? We've been caught already!"

James laughed. "Still snogging all the pretty ones in deserted corridors, Padfoot?"

Sirius laughed as he turned around. "Of course, Prongs. So what are you three doing here?"

Harry pointed at Malfoy. "He's being forced into becoming a Death Eater, Draco's smart enough to have other ideas."

Sirius nodded. "Good to know. Well, Dumbledore's up there. See you guys at home later, for now I'm going to go make incredible love to my wife in our new suite."

"Oh, you are, are you?" Lexy asked as she raised her eyebrow at him.

"Oh, I am," Sirius replied as he scooped her up into his arms and muffled her laugh with his lips.

Harry laughed as he watched them hurry away. "How long do you think it will take them to have a baby?"

James grinned. "If Lexy gets her way, as soon as possible. Sirius is downright terrified of the idea of him being a father. His own was a right prat, you know. But Lily always says that he would be a great one. He turned to mush when you were a kid. You just had to turn those eyes on him and pout and he gave you anything you wanted."

Harry laughed. "I think he'd be a great da. So will Uncle Moony."

"I think that you're right. Now come on, we've got to make proper arrangements for Draco here." James replied.

Draco glanced at Harry oddly as they followed James up the moving staircase. "Is your whole family all crazy like that? I mean, what was up with Black, he was ready to jump Professor O'Bryan's bones right in the hall?"

Harry laughed. "He probably would have if we hadn't been here and it's Professor Black now. They got married at the beginning of the summer. And what do you mean by crazy? They're just in love. Come on."

They stepped inside of Dumbledore's office and he glanced up. "James, what a pleasant surprise and young Mr. Malfoy as well?"

James nodded. "Yeah, Albus, it seems Draco here wants to reform."

"Hey, I don't have anything to reform from!" Draco protested.

James waved him away and nodded at Harry who began to explain everything that had happened. Dumbledore then questioned Draco on what he wanted to do and he nodded once everyone had finished.

"Well, this is a wonderful surprise. I admit I had worried that you, Draco, along with Vincent and Gregory would turn alas to fight alongside Voldemort. It pleases me to think that you at least know what you would like to do. It is a strong risk and you will become a target as well but you know that?" When Draco nodded, Dumbledore continued. "Well, we must find a safe place for you then. Headquarters is out until we know for sure that you are trustworthy ...

I suppose you could stay here in the castle until school begins.”

“He can stay with us if Harry doesn’t mind,” James suggested. “We’ve got plenty of room and the manor is well-protected.”

Harry looked over at Malfoy. He was alright with the idea of Malfoy turning over to the good side but to have him living there with him in his home for the rest of the summer? He wanted to protest but he knew that his father was right. He needed somewhere to stay and he needed to be safe. He nodded. “Yeah, sure he can stay with us.”

Dumbledore smiled at them, his blue eyes twinkling in mischief. “Good. It’s all settled then. Mr. Malfoy, you will reside in Potter Manor until school starts up again. I think it will be best for everyone if you avoid all contact with your parents. Though I do suggest that you write them a letter saying that you do not wish to become a Death Eater and have run away. For good that is ... the papers have been quite full of you being missing.”

Draco nodded. “I can do that, sir. I just don’t want to go back.”

Dumbledore smiled. “Good. I will handle everything else that needs to be done. You’ve got everything you need, James?”

James nodded. “Yes. Draco, have you managed to get supplies yet for school?”

Draco nodded. “Yeah, actually that’s why I ran into you guys. I had no idea about how to contact Harry but then when I was getting my supplies I saw you heading into muggle London.”

“So, you’ve everything then?”

“Yeah, it’s all shrunk in my pockets.”

James nodded. “Good, let’s go then. Harry, you stay here with Draco for a minute while I fix the security features to allow him into the house.”

“Sure.” Harry replied.

James climbed into the fire place and disappeared. Dumbledore smiled at the two of them.

"I had hoped that you two would come to some sort of understanding. I've watched the two of you fight since the beginning. It was pointless."

Harry laughed. "I guess it was yeah."

Draco nodded. "It was petty."

"And childish," Dumbledore added. "But obviously you two are growing up."

"Scary thought," Harry replied with a grin. "Us adults?"

Dumbledore laughed. "Hmm, I suppose it is. Have you heard from Miss Weasley, Mr. Potter?"

Harry shook his head. "No not yet, but she's only been gone a day. I'm sure she's enjoying herself."

"Me as well. It is a good opportunity for her. And when she returns she will be better for it." Dumbledore explained.

Harry nodded. "I think so. I bet she's learning a lot too." The mirror heated up in his pocket and he grinned. "I think we can go now. I'll go first, Draco." Harry waved goodbye to Dumbledore and then he stepped into the fireplace and disappeared. A few minutes later, Draco appeared beside him in the entrance hall.

Mickey stood next to James and turned when they entered. "Come, Mr. Malfoy, I shall bring you to your room while you stay with us."

Draco nodded and he followed Mickey out of the room, looking around in wonder.

Harry sighed as he looked at his father. "I hope we're not making a mistake."

James grinned. "We're not. Why don't you go put all your stuff away? I'm going to use my elementals to retrieve Draco's belongings."

Harry nodded. "I figured as much."

James grinned. "Go. I think after that you can show Draco around. You never know, you two might become the best of friends."

Harry shuddered. "Don't give me nightmares."

James laughed. "Behave. I'll see you later. I've got a few stops to make after I'm done."

Harry watched his father enter the study to begin working on transporting the goods and he sighed. Malfoy on the good side; apparently the world was full of surprises.

\*\*\*\*\*

### ***Two weeks later ...***

The running every morning was refreshing and Ginny got into it almost immediately. It strengthened her legs and it made her feel healthier, stronger, and more importantly better. She had read the books that Emma had assigned and since then they had tested out her powers and her abilities. They had even worked on the animagus transformations that Ginny told Emma she had been working on.

It had been two weeks now since she had arrived in New York and she could already feel a change coming over her body. It wasn't a large one, but the pains were there. Emma told her that she wouldn't see the changes but she would feel them, at least for the first little while. Jed had also delivered her scent to her. She had been surprised when she had discovered that it smelt exactly like her shampoo and her body lotion. It was simply a mixed and stronger scent of her own scent. It was incredible and she knew that it would drive Harry crazy for her to smell like strawberries and spring all over her body rather than only in distinct areas. Jed had even named it after her. It was simply called — Ginevra.

She smiled to herself as she sat down to compose the first letter to Harry. She wanted it to be full of stuff so she had waited. She lay on the huge featherbed in her room sucking on the back end of the sugar quill she was using as she wrote. By the time she was finished writing the letter, the quill was gone.

*Dear Harry,*

*I can't believe that I've already been here two weeks! Time is flying by because Emma is keeping me so busy! We've been doing all sorts of things related to my magic and some just for fun. New York City is a very fast-paced environment and it can almost give one a bit of head ache to be there too often. Everyone always seems to be in a hurry. It's exciting really. I almost don't even know where to begin when it comes to telling you of my adventures as you call them.*

*Let's start with Emma.*

*She's amazing! You would love her if you met her! She's incredibly beautiful, striking almost and is very much an American New Yorker even though she's Canadian and lived in France most of her life. I don't think she would fit in very well anywhere else in the world but at the same time I know that she would because she just has that type of personality. Her hair is almost as black as yours but then she has streaks of dark purple and bright blue through it. You would think that it would look outrageous but it only looks wonderful. Her hair is so long it reaches her knees and her eyes are purple! I thought it was trick of the light at first but they really are. A purplish blue. I've never seen such a colour before.*

*The first day that I arrived we went on a crazy trip through the stores. Apparently Bill and Charlie had insisted on giving her money to take me which she refused but they gave it to her anyway. So she decided to spend all of that money on me? Can you imagine? Though I think that she spent a lot more. I protested naturally, but I was so overwhelmed. Harry, she bought me an entire new wardrobe! Wait until you see what I got. And I cut my hair. Not short mind you, just layered it a bit to give it more – what's that great word Emma always uses – pizzazz! It looks really great. It's technically still the same*



*length but so different. I love it! We did some other stuff as well but I want to surprise you with that when I come back.*

*The next day, we went right into business and Emma began to explain all about the abilities of an empath and how some can do these things and some can do other things. She had this huge pile of books for me to read on psychic abilities, astral projection, telepathy, healing, and making magical properties. She said that I wouldn't know what I was capable of until I tried it. She also explained that I would be going through a lot of physical changes as well as emotional changes during my time here. Apparently empaths grow up a lot faster than normal witches or wizards. She says that I will become a woman faster. My senses will also increase as my power grows. I haven't really experienced any of this happening yet but I'm told that it will be intense because I will feel that emotion five times stronger than normal – anger, sadness, happiness, pleasure, pain, arousal, love, hate, etc. – so we'll have to wait and see how that works out.*

*Emma also wants me to work on building my strength up a bit. She's got me running two kilometres every morning. It's very refreshing. Emma says that by running I will keep my body strong which will help me go through the pain of my fast growing spurts a little easier. I enjoy the running. I didn't think that I would but I like it. It's a good way to start the day and I think that when I return to Hogwarts I will be joining you in your morning jaunt around the lake. It will be fun.*

*Mum wrote to me a few days ago just before you did and told me of some of the horrible attacks that Tom has been inflicting on the muggles. It sickens me to remember that handsome sixteen-year-old boy and his fears and problems that he told me and then to think that he turned into this horrible monster. As soon as I read the articles I wanted to rush into your arms and cradle you close, telling you that none of this is your fault. Because of course most people would understand that Tom is a monster but not certain dark-haired, green-eyed noble gits. I won't name any names but I think you can get the picture. Nothing that happened to those people was your fault. You have to remember that. One day you will defeat Tom and the world will be right but for now you just have to sit back and do things one step at a time, even if that one step doesn't stop horrible things like*

*that from happening. You can only do so much.*

*And I've been trying to figure out a way to react to the news you told me about Malfoy but I'm just at a complete loss. Draco Malfoy has joined our side and is living with you? My gods, I'm going to have to see this to believe it! But to think that his own family would desert him like that ... okay yeah, not really surprised, but how horrible? Is he being a terrible prat or is he actually acting like a decent human being? I guess the world is made for surprises.*

*How are Sirius and Lexy doing? Are they ready for the term to begin? I bet Sirius will make a great DADA teacher. And not to mention how handsome he is, all the girls are going to go crazy. Just hopefully it won't be as bad as Professor Lockhart. Of course, Sirius won't be nearly as giddy and perky and conceited about it but I suspect that he will enjoy having all the girls fancy him. Especially because his eyes are only for Lexy. They really are such a wonderful couple.*

*Sirius wrote me a letter, you know? I laughed so hard when I opened the parchment because he started it off with: Hey Gorgeous — your not moping like your boyfriend is right? Because I think that you should be learning stuff. It made me laugh. He explained to me what their suite looks like at Hogwarts, the marriage one. It sounds wonderful and he says that he and Lexy are great. You know, the way he talks about her, it's like he's still so unsure about how he managed to get her and to be married to her. He loves her more than anything. He mentioned something about you asking him when he was going to have a baby as well. You scared him a bit, you know, with that comment. I'm not sure what it is about having a baby that scares him so much but he really is very close-mouthed on the topic. Good old Sirius, eh? He's so brilliant! I was glad to see a letter from him especially because I didn't expect it.*

*What about Remus and Tonks? Do they have any names picked out for the baby? Is Tonks doing alright? Mum says that the first few months of pregnancy can usually be a bit hard because of the morning sickness and things. I hope she is handling it alright. Remus must be so happy to think that he will be a father. I think he'll be a great daddy.*

*What about James? I bet he's feeling a little low lately with both of his best friends married. He has you, of course, but we both know it's not the same. I think you should find him a girlfriend. He needs someone to keep an eye on him since Lily can't do so anymore. He really only has Foolish, Mickey, and Maddy.*

*Well, Emma is currently calling me to go eat some dinner before we head back into work mode. She mentioned something about maybe going to see a muggle movie later on. I think it would be exciting and a much needed break from all of the work we've been doing. I hope everything is well. I miss you more than anything and am anxious to see you again. I love you.*

*Love Always,  
Your Ginny  
Xoxoxo*

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## Chapter 57: Surprises

**Author's Notes:** Hey i hope you guys like it plz review - Saz gave me some help here so yay Saz!!!  
also i dont own the lyrics or the characters to the Rocky Horror Picture Show - im just a fan :D  
plz review!!

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## Chapter LVII – Surprises

Harry headed down the stairs the next morning and turned around when he heard his name. Draco was standing in the doorway of the room that he had been given for the evening and looked over at him.

“Yeah?” Harry asked.

Draco shrugged. “Well, I mean, it's ... um ... morning, what's for breakfast?”

Harry stared at him for a minute and then he shrugged. He realized that Draco obviously had to be feeling very odd around them. Harry was an enemy, or well as close to one as anything. The two of them had hated each other for years. And then suddenly he had put himself in front of Harry for help. Something that Harry really did have to give him credit for. He must be feeling uncomfortable especially since he had never really been nice to Harry or his friends and suddenly Harry was helping him by not only keeping him away from Voldemort but also by allowing him to stay in his home.

“Who knows? Maddy and Mickey are pretty flexible.”

Draco nodded. “Oh, alright.”

Harry made his way downstairs again but this time with Draco following him.

“So, uh ... what are you going to do today?” Draco asked.

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know yet. I know I’ve got some lessons later with my Da, but other than that I don’t have any definite plans. Why?”

“I don’t know.”

Harry grinned. “Hey, you’ve got your broom right? Maybe we’ll play Quidditch later?”

Draco managed a small smile. “Alright Potter, you’re on.”

Harry grinned. He felt like they were off to a pretty good start. The two of them stepped into the kitchen and Remus grinned up at them.

“Good morning, Harry, Draco.”

“Hey Uncle Moony, what are you doing here?” Harry asked as he took a seat at the table and began to help himself to the pancakes that were on the table.

“Tonks had to go into work early for a meeting so I invited myself

over.” Remus explained.

Harry grinned. “How’s she doing?”

Remus shrugged. “Pretty good. She’s got morning sickness a lot in the morning. But I’ve finally managed to convince her to tell Kingsley that she’s pregnant. She threw quite a fit as she has no desire to be on desk duty for the next few months but she knows that it’s for the best. She can’t risk the baby.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, it’s going to be so awesome to see you as a da.”

Remus blushed. “I never imagined myself as a father.”

Draco was looking at the two of them oddly. “You uh ... you guys really talk about a lot of stuff.”

“What do you mean by that, Draco?” Remus asked.

“It’s just ... my parents would never talk about something like morning sickness with me. It’s ... well, I don’t know, weird.”

Remus nodded, a knowing look in his eyes. “Well, we talk about everything. Right Padfoot?” He asked as Sirius stepped into the kitchen.

“Right about what?” Sirius asked as he turned a chair around to straddle it.

Harry grinned. “That we talk about a lot of stuff.”

Sirius grinned. “Sure we do.”

“How’s the Hogwarts suite?”

Sirius wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. “Amazing. Dumbledore went all out. We’ve got a huge bedroom! A common room, a huge bathroom and not to mention an area where both of us can work if we don’t want to be in our offices.”

“And of course you guys did work last night?” Remus asked, sarcasm dripping from his voice as he smirked knowingly at his friend.

Sirius smirked. “Yeah right. Lex and I christened our room.”

“Christened?” Harry asked.

Sirius grinned. “Yeah. We checked out the bed, the shower, the chesterfield, and I think there might have been a desk somewhere as well.”

“Padfoot!” Remus exclaimed. “Jeesh! Harry and Draco do not want to hear about your sex games with Lexy. And frankly neither do I.”

Sirius grinned. “Ah Moony, you know you want ideas as to how to please Tonks.”

Remus blushed. “I can do that myself, thanks.”

Sirius grinned. “Yeah, it was great.”

“What was great?” Lexy asked as she stepped into the kitchen.

Sirius grinned and pulled her down into his lap to kiss her deeply. “Us making love last night.”

“Sirius! Do you think of nothing but sex?” Lexy demanded, blushing furiously.

Sirius shrugged. “So shoot me! I was in prison for twelve years, I’m permanently horny!”

Lexy slapped his arm. “Prat.”

Sirius wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. “And you’re desperately in love with me.”

“Hmm, I ask myself why every day.” She kissed him softly and then sat down in her own chair before helping herself to some breakfast.

“So Draco, how are you doing this morning?”

He shrugged. “Alright, I guess. I guess my parents know that I’m gone permanently by now.”

Sirius nodded. “Yeah, I’d say so. Are you worried about it?”

“I don’t know. I know that they don’t care that I’m gone.”

“I get that. Don’t sweat it, Draco, my family was just as bad as yours. I ran away from home when I was sixteen.” Sirius explained.

“You did?” Draco asked.

Sirius nodded. “Hell yeah! Do you think that I wanted to live in a family that was embarrassed that I had gotten into Gryffindor? Or that wanted to disown me because my brother joined Voldemort and I had no desire to? Or because I cursed Cissy and Bella at every possible opportunity at school? I was a disgrace to the Black family name.”

Draco grinned. “You used to curse my mother and Aunt Bella?”

Sirius nodded. “Oh, all the time. One time I caught Cissy and Lucius sneaking out of the Slytherin common room in the middle of the night and I cursed them both. Lucius tried to kill me but hey, he was too old for her and a real prat. I always thought that if Cissy fell in with the right crowd she would be properly disowned as well. But sigh, she married that right prat and followed her sister’s footsteps.”

“Do you like anyone in your family?” Draco asked, with what sounded like amusement in his voice.

Sirius grinned. “Of course I do! I love my Aunt Andromeda and Uncle Ted to bushels and not to mention the adorable and ever-loving Tonks. But other than that, nope, never liked any of them.”

Harry nodded. “You lived here, didn’t you, when you ran away?”

“Yeah,” Sirius replied. “Gwen and Andrew loved me and were more than happy to let me move in with them. Gwen was very disapproving

of my parents, especially my mother. She always told me to call her mum and said that Moony and I were the two other sons that she never had."

Remus nodded. "Gwen Potter was a fascinating woman. Do you remember how she reacted when James finally brought Lily home?"

Sirius grinned. "Oh yeah, she took one look at her and then at James and said: *James Andrew Potter, if you put that girl under a love potion I'm going to kill you!*"

Remus laughed. "Yeah and Lily burst into laughter and told her that he had finally managed to win her over or more so that Lily had decided to give him a chance."

"Lily what?" James asked as he stepped into the kitchen.

"Where have you been, Prongs? We've been reminiscing."

James yawned. "Oh I um ... I had somewhere to go."

Remus nodded. "Maddy says that you never came home last night."

James shrugged. "I just had some work to do and stayed late at the office. I er ... well I fell asleep there to be honest. Now what are you saying about Lily?"

Harry grinned. "Uncle Remus and Uncle Sirius were just telling us about Grandma and Grandda and their reactions to Mum."

James grinned. "They loved her quite a bit. Lily is amazing and they knew it."

"Yeah she was. But then again, Andrew always did say that Potters are doomed to fall in love with redheads."

James grinned. "Yeah and Harry's proof of that."

Harry blushed. "It wasn't intentional, you know."



Sirius laughed. "Yeah, well Gin's amazing and we know it so don't sweat it. So what are the plans for the day?"

Harry shrugged. "Who knows?"

James nodded. "Well, I was thinking about inviting the Weasleys over for dinner later. Hermione too, of course."

"Brilliant! Yeah actually I haven't seen Hermione since Ginny left." Harry replied.

"She's been staying with the Weasleys. They'll be coming over later on this evening, well around four anyway." James replied.

Maddy nodded. "Well, Quidditch is always an option."

"Great idea, Maddy, but Draco and I already decided on that one." Harry replied.

"Well, as long as you guys find something to do." James replied.  
"Harry, we've got lessons this morning too before I go into work."

Harry nodded. "I know. You have to go into work again? You just got home."

"Yeah, I do and well I didn't mean to be at work so long I just fell asleep at my desk. Okay, let's go into the library then and get to work." James replied.

"Sure," Harry drank the rest of his juice and stood up. "What are you going to do, Draco?"

Draco shrugged. "No idea."

Remus grinned. "I'll show him how to work the muggle Nintendo systems."

Harry grinned. "Brilliant, I haven't played that in ages."

"Nintendo?" Draco asked; a look of confusion on his face.

Harry nodded. "It's great. You'll get addicted in no time. See you later then."

Harry followed James into the library and closed the door. "Are you sure that you want to do this now, Da? You look really tired."

James nodded. "Yes Harry, you need to work on your powers, alright. Don't worry about me."

"Well, it's just that you've been disappearing more then usual lately and you always look so tired when you get back."

James looked at Harry in alarm. "What do you mean by more then usual?"

Harry shrugged. "Well, I mean, you always have disappeared. At least twice a week you just go away for long periods of time, you say you're at work but work doesn't make you look that exhausted. I remember you doing this a lot when I was younger too, Da, and it's just lately that I really started to think about it. Actually, I think you've been disappearing a lot more ever since I had that dream about Mum."

James didn't meet Harry's eyes. "It's just ... it's just something that I have to do, alright."

Harry nodded. "I'm not asking you to tell me, I'm just saying. Just forget I said anything, alright?"

"Harry ... where I go, it's ... I can't tell you." James replied. "I can't tell anyone. They wouldn't understand."

Harry shrugged. "Whatever you say. Let's work on this, Da."

James nodded. "Alright, let's start with a physical workout; I think that we could both use it."

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Ginny looked up from the book that she was reading on empaths and grinned at Emma who was holding an envelope in her hand and jumping around the room happily.

"They came! They came!" She exclaimed as she did a little happy dance.

Ginny laughed. "What came?"

Emma grinned at her. "My tickets! I ordered them forever ago! And now they're here!"

"Tickets to what?"

"The greatest Broadway musical in the world! You'll love it, Ginevra!"

"Broadway musical? What's that?"

Emma grinned. "It's a great show! Just trust me on this. You will love it."

"When is the show?"

"Tonight. I bought them off a friend of mine and she almost forgot to send them on time. Come on, before we go, we need to get into costume!"

"Costume?" Ginny asked, raising her eyebrows questioningly.

Emma nodded. "Yeah, costume. Dressing up as the characters is only half the fun. I'm going to be Columbia and I think that you should be Magenta. Come on, I've got the perfect outfit for you to wear."

Before Ginny could protest, Emma was dragging her into another room to find the costume. And Ginny wondered just what exactly she was getting herself into.

When Emma was finished, Ginny stared at herself in shock. She was wearing black fishnet stockings with high black heels; a short black maid's dress that cut low at the front and was so short that she was

afraid to sit down. She also wore a white apron on the skirt of it. Her hair was curled and pumped out so that it was huge and her makeup was all black and red. It was a little extreme in her opinion but according to Emma it was the Magenta costume. Ginny was beginning to wonder just what exactly this play was about.

Emma was dressed as the character called Columbia. She had on black fishnet stockings, short shorts that were striped in bright neon colours of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue. She wore a black halter top with a gold vest covered in sequins over top. Then she wore bright red shiny heels to go with that and a gold top hat. Ginny thought that they both looked ridiculous and she busted out laughing.

Emma laughed too. "I suppose we do look crazy."

Ginny nodded. "Just a little. Why are we dressed up?"

Emma grinned. "Because it's only half the fun otherwise. Just like we have to bring the appropriate props."

"Props?"

Emma nodded. "Yup we need ... rice, a party hat, some toast, a water gun, a noise maker, some hot dogs, newspaper, rubber gloves, playing cards, a lighter, and some toilet paper. Come on, let's go."

"What kind of play is this? And what exactly is a Broadway musical?"

"A classic. And it's a muggle thing. It's really a shame that the wizarding community doesn't get into drama. Trust me, you'll enjoy yourself. Though I will warn you, this is my favourite musical and one of my favourite movies as well and it is definitely the oddest. You either love it, or you hate it. There is no in between."

"And you think that I will love it?" Ginny asked.

Emma nodded. "Yeah, I know you will."

Emma took pictures of them dressed in their crazy costumes, explaining to Ginny that they were going to start a scrapbook of her

time away from home before they took a cab to the theatre and found their seats. Ginny was nervous about going into the theatre at first but she realized that she didn't have to be as everyone there was dressed up in even more crazy costumes than she and Emma were. Ginny sat back in her seat as the lights went out and a man in black stepped onto the stage. They had front row seats.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. There will be lighting over on the far wall with the proper responses. You know what to do." He walked off the stage as the audience cheered.

"Responses?" Ginny asked.

Emma grinned. "Trust me, Ginevra – this is incredible. You're going to have a blast!"

Then the red curtain opened and – "Welcome, welcome to the Rocky Horror Picture Show" and then singing began:

*"Michael Rennie was ill the day the earth stood still but he told us where we stand."* Then to Ginny's surprise the audience yelled out "On our feet!" before the singing on the stage continued. *"-And Flash Gordon was there in-"*

"Edible!" yelled the audience.

*"-Silver underwear-"*

"Kinky!"

*"-And Claude Raines was the invisible man-"*

"But he didn't show up!"

*"-Then something went wrong for Faye Wray and King Kong, they got caught in a -"*

"Sexual!"

*"-Celluloid jam-"*

“Yeah jam!”

*“-Then at a deadly pace, it came-”*

“On Janet’s face!”

*“-From outer space. And this is how the message ran-”*

“Freeze!”

The play continued much in the same way with the audience yelling out the right sayings at the right time. The songs were fun and the dancing was brilliant. Ginny could see immediately why Emma loved it so much and why she thought the wizarding community should get into the drama. The props were amusing and the characters were incredible. The play itself really was almost the stupidest thing that she had ever seen but at the same time it was brilliant.

It was about this couple that got engaged named Brad and Janet who went traveling to tell the news of their engagement and got a flat tire on a deserted road. They ended up in a castle with a wacky group of people. Riff-Raff and Magenta were servants of a sort who later turned out to be people from the planet Transylvania. Dr. Frank-N-Furter was a transvestite scientist who built a muscle man to play with named Rocky. Columbia was in love with this rock star wannabe named Eddie and she was all upset when he died. The play was insane, yet Ginny easily found herself getting into it and singing along with the audience. The responses were posted on the far wall so that the people who had never experienced the Rocky Horror Picture Show live would know what to do. It was definitely an adventure. When it finally ended and they returned to Emma’s apartment, Emma grinned.

“Well, what did you think?”

Ginny grinned. “It was interesting.”

Emma nodded. “It’s always good. Come on now, Ginevra, you know that you enjoyed it.” Then to Ginny’s surprise Emma began to sing a

line from the character that she was dressed as, Columbia: *"It was great when it all began. I was a regular Frankie fan. But it was over when he had the plan to start working on a muscle man.* Come on, Ginevra, what comes next?"

Ginny laughed and she couldn't help herself as the words just came out of her mouth. *"Now the only thing that gives me hope, is my love of a certain dope. Rose tints my world keeps me safe from my trouble and pain."*

Emma grinned. "Ha! You did enjoy yourself! What was your favourite part?"

Ginny blushed. "I love the opening song the best."

Emma put the movie on and Ginny grinned when a giant pair of red lips filled the screen and the two of them began to sing along with it:

*"Michael Rennie was ill the day the earth stood still but he told us where we stand. And Flash Gordon was there in silver underwear; Claude Raines was the invisible man. Then something went wrong for Faye Wray and King Kong. They got caught in a celluloid jam! Then at a deadly pace, it came from outer space. And this is how the message ran. Science fiction, ooo, double feature; Doctor X, ooo, will build a creature. See androids fighting, ooo, Brad and Janet; Anne Francis stars in, ooo, Forbidden Planet. Wo oh oh oh oh oh, at the late night, double feature, picture show."*

When the lips disappeared and the church appeared on the screen Ginny laughed. "That was a lot of fun, though I admit, I did think it was crazy."

Emma grinned. "That's the point. Come on, let's enjoy the movie. Tim Curry is amazing as Dr. Frank-N-Furter."

Ginny could only nod in agreement when Emma flipped to the scene she loved most and Tim Curry came down the stairs all decked out and began to sing:

*"How do you do I, see you've met my, faithful handyman. He's just a*

*little brought down because, when you knocked, he thought you were the, candy-man. Don't get strung out, by the way I look! Don't judge a book by its cover! I'm not much of a man by the light of day but by night I'm one hell of a lover! I'm just a sweet transvestite, from Transsexual, Transylvania."*

Ginny only grinned as they settled back on the couch and watched the movie. All in all, her time in New York was definitely becoming educational.

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Later on that day at Potter Manor, Draco and Harry were in the Quidditch pitch in the back playing catch with the quaffle on the broom when Maddy yelled out to them. They both landed and they turned to head towards her.

"Hey Maddy!"

Maddy smiled. "Molly just flooed to say that she is on her way over. Why don't you two come in and clean up."

Harry nodded and he turned to Draco. "Listen, I know that you don't have any respect for the Weasleys but they are like a second family to me. You will treat them with respect or I'm sicking the twins on you."

"Whatever." Draco murmured as he followed them into the house.

The day had actually been pretty enjoyable, more so then Draco would have expected. Potter Manor was incredible and he realized pretty quickly that he was jealous of the life that Harry led. Potter Manor was not really that much more extravagant then Malfoy Manor, but the difference was the house itself. Potter Manor was full of wonderful memories and love and happiness. He had a great relationship with his father and his father's best friends he looked at as uncles. They talked about everything and anything and he wanted that he realized. He wanted a loving family and a loving home and he wanted friends that liked and respected him for who he was not because he was a Malfoy. He wasn't sure when he had realized that



Crabbe and Goyle weren't really his friends but he'd known for a long time. Last year when he had walked in on Harry and Ginny snogging intensely on the train, he had felt a surge of jealousy. It wasn't that he wanted Ginny; it was that someone that beautiful wanted Harry. No one ever treated him that way. Pansy Parkinson ... he was betrothed to her and had been since before he was born but he hated her guts. She was rude and selfish and so annoying. She definitely didn't want him for who he was. It was always about the Malfoy name and keeping the Malfoy name pure and respectable.

He shook the thoughts from his mind and thought about what Sirius had said to him that morning. Sirius was thought of as a disgrace. His mother and his Aunt Bella always said so. He had deserted his family and made them out to be horrible people, or so Draco had been told. But now he wondered really. His parents didn't sound much different then Sirius' had been. Not for the first time in his life, he wondered if his parents even loved him. He closed his eyes and shook the thoughts from his head. That was the last thing that he needed to be thinking about. He stepped into the entrance hall behind Harry and watched as the Weasleys one by one popped out of the fireplace.

"Harry, dear, how are you?" Molly asked as she pulled him close for a tight hug, making sure to cover his face in kisses.

Harry blushed furiously. "I'm fine, Molly, really."

She grinned. "Good. Look at you, growing so tall again! What is with you boys, you grow like weeds!"

Fred grinned. "Aw Mum, its part of the cycle called growing up and how we become more mature and learn how to become responsible members of society."

Harry snorted. "Right, 'cause you're such a responsible member of society."

George shrugged. "We can't all be perfect, mate. It's one of the reasons why we're here"

"Yeah, for dinner." Ron said, making Harry laugh. His eyes moved

over to Malfoy. "It's the ferret, in your house ... what is the world coming to?"

Fred nodded as he looked over at Malfoy. "Yeah, Harry, what gives, why is the Mal-ferret here?"

Harry sighed. "Alright, listen, guys, I know that none of us exactly get along with Malfoy here, but uh ... he's on our side now. He's living here at the Manor because he left home. His parents and Voldemort were trying to force him to be a Death Eater. His choice was a Death Eater or death. He chose to come to me for help."

Molly smiled at Draco and in her motherly way pulled him close for a warm hug. Draco stiffened instantly in her arms. "Oh, you poor dear! I can only imagine the horrible things that you have to endure! I've always said to Arthur that Lucius and Narcissa never took good care of you! Look at how thin you are! We must work on making sure we fatten you up some!"

Ron smirked at Harry. "He looks like he's going to scream."

Harry nodded. "Well, I don't know Ron, Malfoy's different ... he's been different. I think this really changed him a lot. I think it made him really take a look at his life."

Ron shrugged. "Whatever mate, but I don't know how you can trust him. It's Malfoy!"

Molly let go of him just as Arthur came out of the fireplace. "Sorry, I'm late. I ran into Lucius Malfoy at the ministry."

Draco's face was red from the tight hug he had received. No one had ever held him so close and with so much care before. "My father?"

Arthur looked over at Malfoy in surprise. "Yes apparently!"

"What did he want, Arthur?" Molly asked.

Arthur sighed, his ears turning red. "Well, I don't want to speak bad about ... well it was nothing."

"It's okay, Mr. Weasley; I know that you and my father do not get along so well." Draco replied.

Arthur nodded. "Well, he seems to think that I have his son, which I now understand as I was utterly confused by this statement. He says that I have allowed for my blood traitor ways to rub off on his own flesh and blood and that just because me and my family are a disgrace to the wizarding world doesn't mean that I must share this with everyone."

"Did you punch him in the face, Arthur?" James asked as he stepped into the room.

Arthur grinned. "No, I simply told him that I didn't know anything about his son's whereabouts and that it wasn't my problem if he couldn't control his own child."

James grinned. "Good one. Lucius Malfoy pisses me off."

"Did you go to school together?" Harry asked.

James shook his head. "Sort of but not really. Lucius is four years ahead of us. I only knew of him because Sirius was always trying to get his cousin Narcissa to stay away from him. It didn't work though."

Arthur nodded. "I'm older than Lucius and I only know him through the ministry but we have constantly been on opposing sides of the field."

Harry nodded. "I see."

"Yeah well, Draco here has smartened up. He was being forced to conform to Voldemort's will and he decided to run away. Dumbledore is working on ways to keep him safe once school starts up. We are still not sure which Slytherins are working for Voldemort at the moment and with Draco suddenly changing sides, who knows the trouble that might arise." James explained.

Arthur nodded. "That makes sense. Well, Molly and I will naturally do

anything that we can to help.”

James smiled. “Thanks, I appreciate it. Right now, we’re just working on getting him settled here into the Manor. Once school starts up again, I believe that is when Draco will get his real test of will. Well, why don’t we go head into the common room and the kids can go amuse themselves somewhere. Remus, Tonks, Sirius, and Lexy should be here soon.”

Harry nodded and led Fred, George, Draco, and Ron to the game room. Once they were inside, Ron turned to speak.

“No offence, Malfoy, but I don’t believe for second that you suddenly switched sides!”

“Ron! Look, I know that everyone is surprised but I used Legilimency on him as did Dumbledore – Draco is not lying.” Harry explained.

George sighed. “Big change for all of us. Can we test our products on him?”

Harry glared at them. “What do you think?”

Fred rubbed his hands together anxiously. “Excellent.”

Harry laughed. “No. Where’s Hermione anyway? I thought that she was staying with you for the summer.”

“She was,” Ron replied. “But she went home for the weekend. Her parents wanted to see her I guess.”

Harry nodded. “Ever notice how little time Hermione actually spends with her parents? I mean, she’s never there longer then a month in the summer and when she writes to us about what she’s doing she never really mentions them.”

Ron nodded. “Yeah, actually, now that you mention that, it’s true. You’d think they would want to see her more.”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know. We should ask her about it next time

we see her.”

“Sure, you can do it.”

Harry grinned. “Maybe we should wait for Ginny to get back and then she can ask her.”

Fred laughed. “You two are chickens. Can’t even ask your best friend a question about her parents.”

Harry sighed. “Oh, alright I’ll do it! But if she gets angry and curses me I expect one of you to help me out of the situation.”

Ron grinned. “I got your back, mate. Now let’s go outside and play Quidditch.”

George nodded. “Best idea I’ve heard all day. Are you up for it Mal-ferret?”

Draco grinned. “Call me Draco, and sure why not?”

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## Chapter 58: The Grangers

**Author's Notes:** Hey everyone i know it took me a while to update but i was swamped! 6 major assignments and 6 midterms!! man i was stressing! this chapter is random and i know it but i promise it will get better! plz review!!

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## Chapter LVIII – The Grangers

Dinner with the Weasleys had gone better then Harry had expected. He wasn’t sure exactly what he had been expecting, but everything had just gone so well with Draco that he didn’t know how to react. But he still wasn’t sure about what exactly was running through Draco’s mind. Harry had not failed to miss the way that he had stiffened when

Molly had pulled him into her arms for a hug or the look of utter shock that had appeared on his face when she had. He wasn't sure exactly what to think, but the look on Draco's face made him think that maybe he had never been hugged like that before.

After dinner, Draco had claimed he was tired and went up to bed. Fred and George had headed back to their flat so Harry and Ron went up to his room. Ron stretched out in Harry's desk chair.

"So, this all happened just recently?"

Harry nodded. "I tried to write it in a letter to you but it always sounded so far-fetched."

Ron snorted. "With good reason."

"I used Legilimency on him. He was telling the truth. You've seen the paper. He ran away from home. I'm not saying he's a great guy now or anything but he's trying."

Ron nodded. "I'll give him the benefit of the doubt. It's given you something to think about anyway."

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

Ron's eyebrow rose. "Like your every waking thought hasn't been on my sister?"

Harry grinned. "Oh, that. Yeah, I miss her, a lot."

Ron nodded. "It's weird not having her around. Mum and Dad have been acting odd too. I guess that I kind have got the feeling of what it was like for Ginny when I went away to school. I'm the only one at home now."

Harry laughed. "Yeah, I guess so. What have you been doing?"

Ron shrugged. "A little bit of this and a little bit of that. It wasn't so bad, I mean, Hermione was there so at least I had someone to talk to. Bill and Charlie and Fred and George are always dropping in too."

“Charlie?” Harry asked.

Ron nodded. “Yeah, he’s staying in London for a while I guess. I think he’s crashing at Bill’s flat. I don’t blame him. He can’t exactly bring girls home at the Burrow.”

Harry laughed. “Well, what did Ginny do when you were away at school? I mean, maybe you could do some of that.”

Ron snorted. “I’ll pass thanks. Ginny’s always been really close to Bill and he used to come home once a week and take her out shopping or out to dinner or lunch. He totally spoils her. I used to be jealous when I was little but I don’t have that much in common with Bill. Besides, Charlie used to take me to Quidditch games and stuff, so same deal. Anyway, Ginny used to go spend weeks at a time with Bill in Egypt and go shopping. At one point I think they even took dance lessons or something together. Ginny had to beg him forever to do it.”

Harry grinned. “I know she talks about Bill a lot. I hope she’s enjoying herself in New York, learning a lot.”

Ron nodded. “She should work on building up her magic. I mean, I remember, even when I was little, Ginny always knew how to cheer me up. She always knew when I was sad or angry. I guess, she’s kind of special.”

“Really special. I miss her a lot.”

Ron grinned. “It will go by fast. Come on, let’s go fly around for a bit before it gets dark.”

Harry grinned. “Alright.” He grabbed his broom and followed Ron out of the room.

He hoped that his friend was right and that it did go by fast because he really did miss her.

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It was a few days later and Harry was nervously waiting for James to return home from wherever he was because he had somehow been conned into the idea of going to talk to Hermione. He knew that he shouldn't have brought up the whole, *what was up with Hermione and her parents, thing?* But he had and now he was the one who had to confront her about it. He wasn't sure what he was looking for but he just had this feeling that something was off about the Grangers. It had all started the summer before when Hermione had shown up at Potter Manor only a few hours after Dumbledore had said he wanted all of them there and because of the whole Order thing. Then when James had asked about her parents, her comments had been ... well, he wasn't even sure. He just knew that something was off.

*"So, Hermione, how are your parents doing? Were they upset that you had to leave so early?" James asked.*

*Hermione shrugged. "No, they weren't really upset. I mean, they understand what is going on so they know I'll be safer here. They are okay otherwise. They have some big dental convention coming up anyway."*

*"Your parents are dentists?" Remus asked.*

*Hermione nodded. "Yup, both of them."*

*Sirius grinned. "No offence, but I have no idea why people would want to look into other people's mouths on a daily basis."*

*Hermione laughed. "Well, they like it I guess. I've never really asked them. They're very busy people."*

*Sirius shrugged. "I'm just saying, gross job."*

*Hermione smiled. "I suppose. Like I said they're very busy people so I've never really asked them about it."*

It wasn't even a big deal; Harry was just worried that there was something there. When Hermione talked about her vacations, it was never things that she had done with her parents, but just stuff that she had done in general. He sighed when he heard James come



inside.

“Hey Da, coming from work?” Harry asked.

James nodded. “Yeah, lots of paperwork and stuff. What’s up?”

“I need to talk to Hermione about something ... in person. Do you think that I could take the car and go visit her?” Harry asked, a hopeful hint in his voice.

James laughed. “I guess so. But I want you to use your elementals again. Make sure that you’re protected and make sure that you have your mirror.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, okay. I’m going to head out that way then.”

James nodded. “Alright, you know how to get in touch with me if you need me. I’ve um, I’ve got an important meeting later so if I’m not home that’s where I’ll be.”

“Okay, see you, Da.”

Harry headed out in the garage shaking his head. James was still coming up with flimsy excuses to explain where he was disappearing too but he didn’t understand why.

He decided to go with the corvette and climbed into the driver’s seat. He started the engine and began to make his way towards Hermione’s house. He had looked up directions on a map first as he had no idea where she actually lived. As he sat behind the wheel of the car, he was trying to come up with an explanation about how to talk to Hermione. He wasn’t really sure why he thought something wasn’t right between her and her parents, but the feeling was really starting to bother him because it wouldn’t go away. It was just that she never spent any time with them or barely any at all and where he saw his father and the Weasleys on a regular basis he had never even met the Grangers. She had only spent one Christmas with them in five years and not that he minded having her around but it made one wonder. It was probably nothing at all, but he was just really starting to look closely at those around him since Ginny had left. The

thing about James bothered him too and he wondered what it was that his father was hiding. James was so determined that no one would understand.

He sighed and brought his attention back to his current situation. What on earth was he going to say to Hermione? He drove in silence after that and he eventually arrived in front of a large two story white Victorian style house in what he thought was much too soon. It was bigger than he imagined and he assumed that Hermione's parents must make pretty good money as dentists to afford such a house. He took a deep breath before he stepped up onto the front porch and knocked on the door. He grinned when Hermione pulled the door open in pink pyjama bottoms with teddy bears all over them and a white tee shirt that said: *Cuddle Me Cute*.

"Hey Hermione."

"Harry!" Hermione exclaimed in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

He grinned. "Oh, you know, I was in the neighbourhood and I thought I'd stop by. Can I come in?"

"Oh, yes," she replied, stepping back to allow him entrance into the house. "Um, I was just surprised to see you. Why don't you go take a seat in the common room and I'll just go get dressed? I'll be right back."

Harry nodded and headed in the direction that she pointed. The room was a lot different than he had expected. The furniture was all antiques and everything in it was breakable. He was afraid to sit on anything but he finally chose a straight back chair and waited patiently. In his opinion, this was not a living room and it didn't suit Hermione at all. But he was only there a few moments when Hermione came back into the room this time wearing blue slacks and a white silk blouse. Her bushy hair was tamed back into a braid.

"Bit dressed up, aren't you, Hermione?" He asked with a grin.

Hermione laughed and took a seat on the loveseat. "Well, my parents are having some important people over for dinner tonight and they

think jeans are disrespectful for such an occasion.” She replied.

Harry grinned. “But pyjamas with teddy bears on them are alright?”

“Oh shut it, Harry!” Hermione replied, laughing. “I was studying!”

Harry laughed. “Studying what exactly? It’s August.”

“This and that. So really, why are you here? I mean, of course I’m glad to see you, but you must agree that this a surprise.”

“I know. I ... well; I’ve had this weird nagging feeling lately that something is up with you. I brought it up to Ron and he said that I could talk to you about it as he seems to think that the conversation will result in you hexing me.”

“Hex you?” Hermione asked. “Why would I do that?”

Harry shrugged. “You tell me, Hermione. I just ... lately I’ve been thinking about stuff and one of the things that I was thinking about was families. I think it’s because Uncle Remus and Uncle Sirius are both married now. But I realized that I’ve known you for almost six years and I’ve never met your parents. You don’t really get letters at school from them other than a holiday card and when you do go home we always hear stuff about you and what you’ve been doing but nothing really about your parents. You don’t even really go home that often and you spend the holidays and most of the summer with us. I just ... I wondered why?”

Hermione stared at Harry in surprise for a moment and then she caught herself and swallowed. “You really have been thinking.”

“So are you going to tell me why?”

“It’s no big deal, Harry. I’m just not close to my parents like you and Ron are. A lot of time we’re just not interested in the same things so we go our own way and they’re busy a lot.” She explained.

He nodded. “I don’t know why but I’m not buying that. Hermione, you’re one of my best friends, come on, there’s something else here

that you're not telling me."

Hermione stood up. "Harry, you're jumping to ridiculous conclusions that you know nothing about!"

"Conclusions? How can I be making conclusions when I don't have an introduction to the story?"

"You know what I mean!"

"No, I don't. Enlighten me."

"I —", the front door opened and Harry heard a woman call out Hermione's name. "Alright, look now you can meet my parents and get rid of your odd suspicions." She gestured for Harry to follow her into the entrance hall where a pretty woman with Hermione's bushy hair was tamed back into a French twist and her brown eyes so like her daughter's were carefully inspecting her shoes as she placed them in the closet.

"Good day, Hermione. Whose car is that outside and who is this young man?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"Mum, this is my friend, Harry Potter, from school. I've told you about him and I guess that's his car. Harry, this is my mum, Irene Granger."

"It's nice to meet you, Mrs. Granger," Harry replied with a smile.

Mrs. Granger smiled back. "You too, dear. Hermione, did you get through all of those lessons today?"

Hermione nodded. "Yes Mum. I did have some questions though about the Newtonian theory of —"

"That's nice, dear," Mrs. Granger interrupted as she began to make her way down the hall. "Why don't you and your friend Barry go chat in the common room until dinner? I'll quiz you later on what you learnt today."

"Yes Mum," Hermione replied as she watched her mother enter the

room at the end of the hall. Just then the front door opened again and a tall man came in with blondish brown hair that matched his daughter's and a bushy moustache.

"Princess Hermione, how was your day?"

Hermione smiled. "It was wonderful, Dad. I got through all of my assigned readings but I do have a few questions on the Newtonian theory of –"

"Hermione, now is not the time to be discussing this. I only just came home." Mr. Granger interrupted. "Now, who is your friend?"

Hermione nodded. "Yes, Dad. Dad, this is my friend from school, Harry Potter. Harry, this is my father, Rick Granger."

"Nice to meet you, sir," Harry replied, extending his hand out.

Mr. Granger accepted his hand with a grin. "You too, son. Well, Hermione, go entertain your friend um ... Carry and we'll talk later."

Hermione nodded. "Yes, Dad." She gestured for Harry to follow her back into the common room. "See? Everything is just fine. I have no idea what crazy notions you were going on about?"

Harry stared at his friend in surprise. "Hermione, what are your lessons?"

"Oh well, Mum and Dad think that my magical education is important and all that but that I also needed to be concerned with a proper education. I study history, sciences, geography, philosophy, mathematics, languages, English, and music. You know, normal stuff like that. They quiz me from time to time to see how much I've learned and to make sure that I'm on the right track. It's to broaden my mind I suppose. I've had these lessons since I was four." Hermione explained.

"Hermione, you can't possibly be any smarter than you already are."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "It's not about being smarter; it's about

being the best. My parents want me to have the best and to be the best at everything that I do. I can fluently speak French and Italian because it makes me worldly. I've traveled and gone to finest museums so that I can learn about culture. I've studied histories and philosophies so that I can be part of important philosophical and historical discussions. It's the knowledge that's important."

"Hermione, listen to yourself!" Harry exclaimed. "You're lessons are ... well alright, they are good, but do you really want to learn all of this or do you only want to learn it because you're parents want you to know it?"

"That's a ridiculous question, Harry! My parents only want what's best for me. They love me and are supportive of my decisions and –"

"That's bull! You've been one of my best friends for almost six years and when you introduced me to your parents neither one of them got my name right. Your mum called me Barry and your dad Carry. Now I'm not vain enough to expect them to know my life story but they should at least be able to get my name right." Harry replied.

Hermione nodded and then she sighed. "Okay, so they don't really listen to me so much. They live very busy lives and don't always have time to sit and talk with me and discuss my life. It doesn't mean that they don't love me or that they are bad parents."

"That's not what I'm saying and you know it."

"Then what are you saying?" Hermione exclaimed, her voice rising in her anger. "Are you telling me that my parents don't care? Or that they don't even know the names of my best friends? Or that half the time they don't even remember my birthday? Or that they send me on trips and send me presents so they don't feel guilty when they go off to parties? Or that they only ask me to come home so that my friends think that we're a normal family? Or that they only had a child because it seemed like a good idea at the time? Or that they only have me doing all of these lessons so that they brag to their colleagues about how intelligent their daughter is? Or how they ignore that I'm a witch completely? Is that what you're saying? Because I already know all of that!"

Harry sighed and reached forward to tug Hermione into his arms. She fell into them without hesitation and began to sob on his shoulder. He ran his hand up and down her back to try to calm her. He had never really seen Hermione break down like this. She cried, yes, but never to such an extent. Her hands were fisted in his shirt as she sobbed. He sighed when her sobs turned to sniffles. When she finally stopped crying she pulled away wiping her eyes.

"I'm s-s-sorry, Harry," she replied.

Harry tilted her chin up to look at him. "Don't be. I knew something was off. Are you okay?"

She nodded. "I'm used to it."

"That doesn't answer the question. Why don't you come stay at Potter Manor for the rest of the summer? There's only less than two weeks left until school starts up?" Harry suggested. "Besides, I've uh ... I've got some interesting news to share with you."

"Alright, I just ... I have to stay for dinner tonight ... would you like to stay?" She asked.

Harry grinned. "Sure. Hey, want to go outside or something? I've got a story to tell you."

"Alright."

They went out into the back yard and sat down at the table on the patio before Hermione spoke. "So what's going on, Harry?"

"Well, you would have found out yesterday if you had been at dinner but since you came home ... I've got an unexpected house guest."

"Who?"

"Draco."

"MALFOY!" Hermione shrieked.

Harry nodded. "The one and only."

"Why?"

Harry began to explain everything that had happened as Hermione looked at him in surprise. When he finished she just nodded.

"Wow, that is unbelievable and I'm proud of him actually. I never thought I'd see the day where Draco would stand up to his father like that. I thought for sure he was going to become a Death Eater."

Harry nodded. "So did I. But, now he's on our side at least for now. Dumbledore is going to be keeping a really close watch on him from now on. When school starts up again, that's going to be the real test because he's going to be hated by many Slytherins."

"Yeah, he will be." She heard her parents call out her name and she nodded. "Come on, dinner's ready. As soon as Mum and Dad's guests leave we can head out."

"Great." He followed Hermione into the dining room and took his seat. A few seconds later, the Grangers came in leading in a large beefy man with no neck and a tall thin blonde woman. An even larger boy stood behind them with blonde hair and beady eyes. Harry stared at them and his heart pounded in his chest. They couldn't be the same ... life would not be that cruel to him. But then –

"Hermione, Harry, I'd like for you to meet our guests. This is an associate of your father's, Vernon Dursley and his wife Petunia and this is their son Dudley. Vernon, Petunia, I'd like for you to meet our daughter Hermione and her friend from school, Harry Potter." Mrs. Granger replied.

Harry stayed silent and he was glad to see by the look of horror that had appeared on his aunt and uncles faces that they did indeed recognize him. He nodded at them and under the table his hands clenched into fists. *How was he supposed to be expected to sit at a table with these people? These people who were supposed to be his family and had beat him and abused him beyond measure as a child.*



He took a deep calming breath but it didn't help and a picture fell off the wall in the back, crashing to the floor. He instantly called forth his elementals to try to hold back his anger as the Grangers went to go fix the picture, wondering why it had suddenly crashed to the floor.

"Harry, I'm not sure if you remember me, but um ... how are you?" Petunia asked from her seat next to him as the Grangers went to see about the picture. Her voice was nervous and her eyes looked sad.

Harry glared at her. "My memory is just fine, thank you, and if you really want to know how I've been then I suggest you not talk to me again."

She nodded and turned back to her plate. Harry excused himself from the table half-way through and asked Hermione to point him to the bathroom. He had his elementals place a silencing charm on the room before he pulled out his mirror. "Da!"

James' face appeared a few seconds later. "Harry, what's going on?"

"Where are you?"

"I'm at the office. Where are you?"

"I'm at Hermione's house and you'll never believe who just walked in as dinner guests and then have the nerve, the bloody nerve to ask me how I am?!" He exclaimed angrily.

"Harry, calm down. You have to keep a better control on your emotions." James replied. "Ginny's not here to calm you down. Now tell me what happened?"

"The Dursleys happened!"

"What?" James asked in surprise.

"They're bloody here! Sitting in the dining room and Aunt Petunia is ... talking to me like we're old friends!"

"WHAT?" James asked again, this time his eyes flashing in anger.

“You heard me!”

James gulped. “Harry, you tell them that ... no never mind. I’m on my way.” He disappeared from the mirror and Harry gulped. He knew that he had been angry but now he wasn’t so sure if it was a smart idea to have told James that the Dursleys were there.

He went back into the dining room and took his seat. A few minutes later he heard the knock at the front door. Mr. Granger went to go answer it and a few seconds later James stepped into the room.

“James, what are you doing here?” Hermione asked in surprise.

“Harry, stand up and come over here.” James demanded.

Harry nodded and went to go stand next to his father. “Um, Da, Hermione was going to come over and stay with us the rest of the summer is that okay?”

James nodded. “That’s fine.” He turned his attention back to the table. “I apologize for barging in like this, Mr. Granger, Mrs. Granger, but I have a bone to pick with your guests.”

Vernon stood up. “Oh, you have a bone to pick with me do you, Potter? You did enough!”

James smirked. “I hardly did enough. What I did to you didn’t even constitute for half of what you did to him! Do you know what I found when I brought him home, Vernon? Welts on his back; bruises on his body; cuts and dried blood that hadn’t properly been cleaned; he was starved and he was abused! If Lily ever finds out what you – you ought to have deserved a hell of a lot more! And now I find out that Petunia is sitting here trying to make small talk? What the hell is wrong with you people?”

“Excuse me!” Mr. Granger exclaimed. “But what are you talking about? Abuse? Those are serious accusations, Mr. Potter!”

James nodded. “I know.” He walked around the table and grabbed

Vernon by the cuff his collar. "If I EVER see you again, I will kill you, and that's not a threat. It's fact." He shoved him back against the wall and then turned to Petunia. "You stay away from me and mine." He turned back to Harry. "You can drive Hermione and you back when you're ready. There's somewhere that I have to be." Then he stormed out of the room, his anger still radiating from him.

Mr. Granger was busy helping Vernon to his feet. "I do say, Mr. Potter, what on earth came over your father?"

Harry shrugged. "I couldn't say and I apologize for his behaviour. Sir, Hermione would like to spend the rest of the summer at my home, do you mind if we leave early?"

Mrs. Granger nodded as she tried to calm Petunia. "Yes, that's fine dear, go."

"Well, get your stuff." Harry replied.

Hermione nodded and hurried out of the room. Within ten minutes they were in the car and heading towards the manor.

"What was that all about, Harry? Does your father know Mr. and Mrs. Dursley?"

Harry laughed. He was still so angry about the Dursleys being there. "Oh yeah, we're um ... old friends."

"And James was talking about abusing someone and he –" she gasped. "You!"

"What?" Harry asked in surprise.

"Harry, were they talking about you?"

"Let it go, Hermione."

Hermione shook her head. "No, they were talking about you with the welts and the bruises and the – oh God, Harry!"

“Hermione leave it alone! It was a long time ago. I lived with them for a while when I was little and ... no one else knows this but Ginny, okay. I don’t want anyone to know. Just forget about it.” He demanded angrily.

Hermione nodded. “I’m sorry, Harry.”

“I don’t want your pity.”

“I didn’t pity you. I’m sorry that that happened to you.”

He nodded and sighed. “I’m sorry that I snapped at you.”

She smiled. “It’s okay.” They were quiet for a few minutes before Hermione spoke again. “So why don’t you tell me more about Draco?”

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Ginny was sitting in the middle of the living room floor concentrating on letting her power build up. She couldn’t believe that she had already been in New York for a month. She could feel herself getting stronger and growing and she truly enjoyed the running she did every morning. She had covered more things than she could even imagine. When she had mentioned to Emma that she had been learning how to become an animagus, Emma had instantly gotten her to continue her lessons. With Emma’s help in focusing her power and increasing her magic, Ginny had managed the full transformation of the fox. She had been impressed and so pleased with herself that was eager to work on the second one. She was now working on the eagle transformation in her spare time.

Telepathy was another skill that Ginny had discovered that she had the talent for. If she was looking someone in the eye and spoke to them in her mind they could hear her. She wasn’t sure how she figured it out but it happened quickly and it came easily. Emma explained to her that the skill would be stronger in those she was closer too. For example, Emma strongly suspected that if she concentrated hard enough, she could talk to someone who was in another room or town and if the connection was really strong maybe

even across the ocean. Ginny was hoping that she could accomplish that one as she wanted to freak Harry out by saying hello to him inside of his mind.

They had been recently working on astral projection as well to see if she could handle it since she had mastered telepathy. However, Ginny was struggling with the concept of it and how to project herself outwards. Emma finally told her that it wasn't worth the effort at the moment and that they would maybe work on it later on.

Ginny had also learned how to make magical stones or crystals or staffs and wands for special occasions. By concentrating on a substance she could transform it into a magical property used for a small period of time. For example, she had transfigured a water goblet into a purple crystal that could be used to give good energy to a person for five days. It turned out to simply be a more advanced idea of transfiguration but she did it wandlessly. It had come easily and because of it, Emma was moving her onto the next aspect, wandless magic. Ginny was anxious to learn this as she had always been thoroughly impressed with Harry's ability to do wandless magic. She hadn't failed to notice how often James never used his wand either. She looked up when Emma came into the room.

"Well, Ginevra, how's it coming?" Emma asked.

Ginny nodded. "Good, I think. I feel the power, differently then I did before I mean. Instead of feeling it in my wand, I can feel it in my skin, does that make sense?"

Emma smiled. "Yeah, that makes sense. The magic is within you. Now it is in your wand as well but it's just a tool. If the magic was in the wand then anyone would be able to do magic. We're going to start slowly, let's see if you can levitate anything without your wand. This pillow here for instance. You know the spell and you know the wand movements, but how do you get it to do what you want without the wand movements?"

"With my mind?"

"Exactly. Now concentrate that power and instruct it to levitate."

Ginny focused her energy on the pillow and using a non-verbal spell willed the pillow to move. To her surprise it lifted and slowly floated into the air.

Emma smiled. "Excellent. Now let's move onto to something harder. The more spells you can master without your wand, the stronger your ability will be." Emma grinned. "In fact, if you can get your wandless abilities up to speed, I think that I can even teach you my specialty."

"What's that?" Ginny asked.

"Flame throwing."

Ginny laughed. "Flame throwing?"

"Yup. I can conjure fire out of nothing. We'll have to see what your abilities are."

Ginny grinned. "I hope its something cool like that."

Emma laughed. "Oh, I'm sure it's even better. Now come on, let's work on this wandless stuff. Next I want you to do a summoning charm."

Ginny nodded and got back to work. The faster she mastered this, the faster she could go on to even more interesting things. She grinned, yeah; she was enjoying her time in New York.

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## Chapter 59: Playing Games

**Author's Notes:** hey i edited this so i hope its good for approval now! thanks to everyone! love ya! plz review! and thanks to eddie as well! he rocks!

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## **Chapter LIX – Playing Games**

When Harry woke up on September the first, he couldn't believe that it was time to go back to school. He quickly showered and dressed before he made sure that his trunk was packed and then he made his way downstairs. He met Hermione on the stairs and grinned.

"Hey, are you ready to go?"

She nodded. "I can't believe that we're starting our sixth year! That's incredible! The time just flew by!"

He laughed. "I am so not surprised to hear you say that. But yeah, it is pretty neat, eh?"

"What's neat?" Draco asked as he followed them down the stairs.

Hermione and Draco had actually surprisingly got along quite well since she had shown up and Harry was thoroughly surprised. Draco was treating her well enough and not calling her a mudblood or even bothering to mention that she was muggleborn. Harry was pleased to see the change in him and he hoped that he continued on this path of righteousness. Harry had realized that when you really got past Draco's cocky exterior he was well ... nice. He was also a little shy and soft inside. Draco Malfoy as a softie, yeah, it was hard to believe, but he could see it. He had obviously had a harder life than anyone had realized. His relationship with his parents was obviously pretty bad considering the way they had tried to force him into being a Death Eater or death and he had gone to the one person he hated most for help. In Harry's opinion, that not only took courage but a lot of strength. He knew that Draco was scared and he had every right to be. He just hoped that when they returned to school and the time came for him to really be tested he pulled through.

He grinned at Draco before answering his question. "That we're going into sixth year. It just seemed to fly by."

Draco snorted. "At least one of us is looking forward to it."

"Hey, it's gonna be bad, Draco. There's nothing that we can do about

it but I think the DA members will protect you a bit when I talk to them. Ted and Blaise are cool like that. Wow, I never thought that I'd say that about a Slytherin." He replied as they stepped into the kitchen.

James looked up when the three of them entered. "Good morning."

"Hey Da! What's going on for the train ride today?"

James grinned. "I borrowed a car from the ministry and we're going to drive there. I guess maybe I should invest in something a little bigger than a two-seater, eh? Anyway, Remus and Tonks will be coming with us since Lexy and Sirius are already at Hogwarts. They have to be there to set up their lesson plans and stuff. Man, Padfoot a teacher ... I don't think that I'm ever going to get over that."

Harry laughed. "I think that he's gonna be a great teacher. Does Snape know he's teaching yet?"

James nodded. "Yeah, I guess Sirius sent him a letter informing him and the git blew up at Dumbledore."

Harry laughed. "He blew up at him? Why? Sirius is a way better teacher than he is!"

Draco shrugged. "I always thought he was alright."

Harry glared at him. "Yeah, but he doesn't pick on you or give you failing marks when you do the assignment right just because he hates you."

James frowned. "I spoke to Dumbledore about that again, especially after you did so amazing on your O.W.L.s and he says that if Snape continues with that this year he's going to be in trouble. He can't give you a barely passing grade when you're doing so well."

Hermione nodded. "It's ridiculous! Harry does so well at Potions and most of the time his potion looks exactly like mine if not better and I get an O yet he gets A. It's wrong."

James nodded. "Yeah, well Snivelis always was a greasy-haired git."



"I still don't understand how Dumbledore trusts him. He's such a git."

Draco looked up in surprise. "Dumbledore really does trust Snape? I always thought it was lie, I mean ... he's a Death Eater. He works for Voldemort."

James and Harry exchanged looks. Draco still didn't know anything about the Order or about Snape being a spy. Dumbledore thought that he should be kept in the dark for a while longer until he actually proved that he wanted to be on this side. Harry couldn't help but agree. He knew how much he hated not knowing stuff but at the same time, they weren't sure how much they could trust him. Time would only tell.

"I don't know. I guess Dumbledore has his reasons." James replied.

Draco nodded. "Yeah, that makes sense."

"So Hermione," James began. "Are you ready for school? Another year as a prefect?"

She nodded. "Oh yes. Prefects have a hard job you know and we must make sure that everyone is kept in line and following the rules and —"

"You know, Granger, I'm a prefect too."

She blushed. "I know. But don't you think that it is a huge responsibility?"

Draco shrugged. "Not really ... but I guess I'll be working a bit harder at it this year ... with Pansy." He grimaced.

James grinned. "Pansy? A friend of yours."

Draco shrugged. "My betrothed, if you must know."

"Betrothed?" James asked in surprise. "I didn't think people still did that anymore."

Draco nodded. "Unfortunately. I hardly want to be betrothed to her. But my parents and her parents arranged it when we were babies."

James nodded. "That sucks. When do you have to marry her?"

"Two weeks after graduation. The day has already been set and everything. I don't want to marry her." Draco whined before he caught himself. "I mean ... hell! I ... I don't want to marry her!"

James nodded. "Yeah I don't blame you. Do you know about the betrothment?"

"What do you mean?"

James shrugged. "Well, there are different types of them and depending on what kind you had, you might be able to get out of it."

Draco brightened considerably. "How do I find this out?"

James grinned. "I'll look into the records of the bonding. If you were blood bonded then the only way out is death. There's no kind of spell or anything. But if you were not blood bonded then there are a few different options. If you bonded based on chastity then you both have to be virgins on your wedding night or the bond is broken. There could have simply been payments. There are so many different ways that the bond could have been done. But for the bond to work it has to be done officially at the Ministry of Magic and signed in the *Book of Betrothment*. So everything will be listed there. I'll look into it when I get a spare moment at work and I'll let you know."

Draco grinned. "Thanks, Mr. Potter. You have no idea how much I appreciate that."

James smiled. "Call me, James, everyone else does. And it's no problem. Now why don't you guys go upstairs pack the rest of your stuff and we'll head out."

Harry stayed back until Draco and Hermione left the room. "Da, that was nice of you."

James grinned. "I feel bad for him. His parents obviously have never treated him properly and now he's being forced to marry someone that he obviously doesn't care about. Do you know this Pansy?"

Harry grimaced. "Pansy Parkinson? Yeah, she's a cow and she's rude and ignorant. She hangs around him like he's a god and I always knew that he didn't like it but I never thought anything of it. I only just found out that he was betrothed last year."

"It's rough. I knew a few kids in school who had done that as well. Sirius' parents tried it when he was about seven and he cursed his mother so bad she was in St. Mungo's. Now, Sirius' mum was a bitch, but still he managed to get out of it. The betrothment never went through. It's all about keeping the pure blood line pure. It used to be almost mandatory for all purebloods. Many members of our family were betrothed, including your grandparents. But my parents fell in love and were betrothed later on, even though my father was originally set to marry another woman. A lot of families did that to see if there would be love later on in life. You shouldn't have to experience a life time with someone you don't like. But everyone should be free to marry whoever they want." James explained.

Harry nodded. "I agree. Well, I'll go get my stuff."

James nodded. "Alright, the train leaves in less then two hours."

Harry headed upstairs thinking about what his father had said and he sighed. He really did feel bad for Draco. He hoped that his father managed to find a way out of it for Draco. He had high hopes for him and he thought that if he knew that he didn't have to marry Pansy, his spirits would lift tremendously and that he might fight harder. He shook the thoughts from his head and hurried up the stairs, for now he needed to think about the upcoming year.

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Harry sat in the train compartment with Draco as the train started off and he grinned when Neville opened the door.

“Hey Harry, how was your sum – Malfoy?” Neville exclaimed as he glanced over at Draco in surprise.

Harry grinned. “It was interesting, Nev, Draco, here is ... well he’s on the good side now.”

Neville sat down and looked across the seat at Draco. “Um ... okay.”

Draco smirked. “Yeah, I’m not going to bite, Longbottom.”

Neville shrugged. “Well, I have a good reason to be suspicious, you know.” He turned to Harry. “But if you trust him then so do I.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks, Nev. So how was your summer?”

“Alright, Gran made me stay pretty close to home now that Voldemort is officially out in the open.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I know what you mean.”

“Where’s Ginny at by the way? I was surprised not to find her in here?” Neville asked.

Harry sighed. “She’s in New York City.”

“America?” Neville asked in surprise.

He nodded. “Yeah ... she’s studying there for a few months. She’s coming back in November.”

“Wow, I bet you miss her a lot.”

“Yeah, I really do.” He turned when the compartment door slid open. “Hey Colin, Dee, what’s up?”

Colin grinned. “Not too much, we were just commenting on how quiet it is without Gin.”

“Yeah, it is a bit, eh?”

“Harry, are we going to have the DA this year?” Demelza asked.

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I think so. It’s going to be more of an official club though and Uncle Sirius, well Professor Black, the new DADA teacher is going to help me out.”

“Neat,” Colin replied. “It will be more fun. Hey, I ran into Blaise and Daphne. They were snogging like crazy in the hallway.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, I noticed that they finally got together last year. It only took Blaise five years to get her.” He looked up again when the compartment door opened again. “Ted, Blaise, Dana, Daphne, what’s up?”

Blaise shrugged. “We got your owl. It said you wanted to talk to us about something.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I do. It’s about Draco.” He pointed over at him and Blaise grimaced.

“Great, the Mal-ferret?”

Harry grinned. “Look he changed ... well he changed sides. There was an issue over the summer and he ran away from home. But I think that the students in your house that used to be his friends are no longer going to be helpful.”

Ted nodded. “Tell me about it. When my mum and I deserted his army it was intense.” He turned to Draco then. “Mate, good on you for leaving. I’ve got your back but if you turn out to be lying, then you better watch yours.”

Blaise nodded. “Same goes.”

“Thanks. I appreciate it. But I really am on the good side. My parents were ... I was being forced to become a Death Eater.”

Ted winced. “Then good for getting out.”

“Thanks.” Draco replied.

Blaise nodded. "Well, we're going to go find a private snogging compartment, right Daph? But we'll talk to you guys later."

Dana nodded. "Yeah, I'd like some alone time with Nott as well."

"See you later," Ted replied.

The four of them left the compartment followed by Demelza and Colin. Neville sighed. "Wow, this is going to be a huge change."

Harry laughed. "You can say that again."

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The welcome feast was just as wonderful as normal but Dumbledore's speech was a little more intense. He talked about the issues that had arisen during the summer with Voldemort and how the wizarding community was dealing with it. There were new rules set on the castle about being on the castle grounds and Hogsmeade trips were going to be spread out differently, allowing only so many students to go at once because of the threat. He congratulated Sirius and Lexy on getting married during the summer and introduced the two professor Blacks before dismissing everyone to their rooms.

Harry hurried over towards Draco as soon as the feast was over. "Well?"

He shrugged. "Crabbe and Goyle have obviously been picked to try to convince me to come home."

Harry shook his head. "Listen, Draco, you can't listen to them. This is a decision that you made because you know it's right for you. If you go back ... you're not only most likely going to end up dead but you'll be a Death Eater and married to Pansy. We need you on our side."

Draco smiled. "Thanks for the support, Potter. I don't plan to listen to them or anything like that. But they're trying. It's the fact that I share a bloody dorm with them that I'm worried about."

“But you also share a dorm with Ted and Blaise.”

“Did I hear someone call?” Blaise asked as he came into step with them.

Harry grinned. “Malfoy’s just commenting on the fact that he has to dorm with Crabbe and Goyle who are on his father’s list of ways to get him to go home.”

Blaise swung his arm around Draco’s shoulders. “Stick with us, mate, and you’ll be safe.”

Daphne came up next to them, rolling her eyes. “Your ego is insane, why am I with you again?”

Blaise laughed and kissed her. “Because I’m sexy and irresistible and you love me!”

Draco rolled his eyes. “Yeah, I’m sure that’s it. But thanks for the support, Zabini. I might really need it at some point. But right now, I’m just wondering what will happen when I close my eyes. Crabbe and Goyle can be conned into doing anything.”

Harry nodded. “That’s a really valid point. You should bring it up to Dumbledore and maybe he can have you or them moved, preferably them as Blaise and Ted also share a room.”

“We’ll see how it goes. But that’s probably the first place I’ll head in the morning.” Draco replied.

“Alright then. Well, I’m going to my dorm, see you guys later.” Harry waved goodbye and headed into the Gryffindor common room. He was half-way up to his dorm when he heard Lavender’s voice.

“Please Vat! Do we have to go through this every year?”

Parvati was glaring at Lavender in the corner of the common room. “Yes, we do! I want the truth, Lave. What happened this summer?”

“It doesn’t matter.” Lavender insisted. “I want to forget about it and I

plan to, alright?”

Parvati shook her head. “No, it’s not alright. You need to talk about this and get it off your chest.”

Lavender ran a hand over her stomach as she nodded. “Not, right now.”

She hurried up the girls’ staircase and Parvati sighed before she followed her up. Harry wondered briefly what that conversation had been about. He shook it off and headed upstairs to his dorm. Seamus grinned at him.

“Hey Harry, how was your summer?”

Harry grinned. “It was alright. You?”

Seamus grinned. “Same. But I did decide that this year, I’m not letting her get away from me. I’m gonna take the chance.”

Harry laughed. Seamus had had a crush on Lavender Brown since third year but every time he managed to get enough guts to ask her out, she was with someone else. Personally, he had always thought that they would be good for each other. “Well, best of luck, mate.”

Dean grinned. “If he doesn’t make a fool out of himself he’ll be lucky. Hey Harry, what’s this I hear from Neville that Malfoy’s your friend now?”

Harry laughed. “I had an interesting summer. Draco approached me and asked for help. I thought it was a hoax. But his parents are Death Eaters and I guess Voldemort appeared at his house and everything and told him he was to become a Death Eater in so many days and that he had to prepare for it. He decided he didn’t want that life and he left. I’m not saying he’s no longer a jerk but he knows what he wants and he doesn’t want to be on Voldemort’s side. He could use some friends and support.”

Seamus nodded. “Blimey, he’s pretty brave then to get out of there. And he actually came to you?”



“Yeah ... I was pretty surprised myself. But he figured I was the one to go to. Anyway, I’m thinking about making the DA an official sort of club this year and the new DADA teacher plans to help me out. Draco is going to join so I’m hoping you guys want in again?”

“Oh, yeah, of course, mate.” Dean replied. “The DA was awesome.”

Seamus grinned. “I’m in as well.”

Harry grinned. “Great! Well I’m heading to bed, I’m tired tonight.”

Dean and Seamus nodded as Harry stripped down to his boxers and climbed into his four-poster, falling asleep almost instantly.

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Ginny sat in the middle of the huge bed trying to bring forth her mind concentration. Over the last two weeks she had really managed to get a good grasp on telepathy. She could talk to Emma when she was on the other end of the city. She had explained to Emma the idea that she had about trying to communicate with Harry telepathically and Emma had told her that it could be done but she would need to concentrate really hard until she mastered it.

Now she was sitting on her bed, bringing Harry’s face to her mind and trying to think of what he might currently be doing. She knew that it was around eleven p.m. in Scotland and that he would probably be in bed at Hogwarts since it was the first day of school. She brought his face to mind, thinking about his beautiful green eyes and his messy black hair and she thought about how she’d like to talk to him. Then to her surprise, a large lion shook his head and blocked Harry from her view.

She pouted; he was obviously using his elementals to guard his mind. It was smart and she knew it, but she wanted to speak to him. She looked at the lion and quietly spoke to him in her mind.

*“Armand ... will you let me in to speak to Harry? You know that I won’t hurt him?”*

*"How is it that you know my name, Witch?"* The lion responded.

*"Because I know the names of all of Harry's elementals. I love him."*

Armand tilted his head, as if he could see her. *"You are the fair, Ginevra?"*

She smiled. *"I am."*

*"And you wish to communicate with my master in his mind?"*

*"I do. I would like to try. It is a new power that I am developing."*

Armand nodded. *"I can hear you and I can feel your presence, but I cannot see you fair one, why?"*

*"Because I'm across the ocean. I'm in America."*

*"I see. Well fair one, I do understand that you are extremely important to my master and that he would want you to have access. You and only you. I am granting you access and telling my partners to as well. He may not know who you are."* Armand replied.

Ginny grinned. *"I know. I'll have fun with him before I tell him the truth."*

*"You fair one, make him happy. I grant you entry."* Armand the lion bowed and then vanished in a puff of smoke and Ginny found herself in a long tunnel. She walked forward and stepped into what looked like a white area or white mist and then it vanished. She could see Harry clearly now and she smiled. He appeared to be sleeping.

Ginny focused her energy on his mind and she could suddenly see his thoughts or dreams for that matter, as he was sleeping soundly. She grinned as she watched it unfold in his mind like a story:

*An image of herself was sitting on the grass in a meadow somewhere wearing a long flowing white skirt and a black tank top. Her hair was blowing in the wind. Since it was Harry's dream, she looked the same*

*as she had before she had left for New York. Harry was sitting next to her in jeans and a tee-shirt and he was grinning at her as he gently ran his hands up and down her arms before leaning in to kiss her softly.*

*The kiss went on and on and she found it to be kind of erotic to watch herself kiss her boyfriend. Then the dream changed and they were walking through a wooded area. Suddenly Harry had pulled her against a tree to kiss her passionately. She watched fascinated as her own hand slid down to fiddle with the snap of his jeans. He had a sloppy grin on his face and his emerald green eyes were dark in arousal and she watched as his dream version of her pressed her lips to his for another long, deep, breathtaking kiss as her hands fisted in his hair. Then suddenly the dream changed again.*

*This time, the two of them were walking hand in hand through the halls at Hogwarts and she pushed him up against the wall to snog him. He just grinned at her foolishly. His dream darkened then as the castle walls spun out of control and the two of them landed in a graveyard before disappearing. Ginny could see a younger Harry tied to a head stone as Voldemort stepped naked from a large cauldron. He fiddled with his wand as he began to talk to Harry before putting him under the Cruciatus Curse.*

Then there was a gasp and she was pulled from the dream as Harry woke up.

She sat on her bed, holding a hand to her heart, her breathing heavy from the scream of anguish that she had tried to let out upon seeing Harry in such pain. She climbed off of the bed and went into the kitchen for a glass of water. Emma was sitting at the kitchen table doing a cross word puzzle.

“Are you alright, Ginevra?”

Ginny nodded as she gulped down the water. “I – I just got into Harry’s mind, I think.”

Emma dropped the newspaper she was holding and kicked a nearby chair out so that Ginny could sit. “Tell me.”

She took a deep breath before she spoke. "Well, I was concentrating on him like you told me too and Harry has ... he knows how to do Occulmency so I met a block but then the block let me through when I explained myself as the block knew who I was. Does that make sense?"

Emma nodded. "It makes perfect sense. You may be miles away, but Harry himself would have made those guards or blocks for his mind. He knows and loves you so he would naturally let you in and the blocks or guards are part of him. By explaining they would understand enough to keep his shields up but let you in. That's very important and good that he has managed to do that level of Occulmency. He's obviously a very powerful wizard."

Ginny nodded. "Yes, well, once I was there, he was asleep so I think I was pulled into his dream."

"That's normal. Was it a good one?"

She blushed. "Well, we were kissing and it was so ... well kind of erotic to watch us kissing from his fantasy, I guess."

Emma grinned. "I can imagine it would be. What else?"

"Well, we were kissing and then it got a bit more intense ... I um ... I was playing with the snap on his pants as if I was about to do something."

Emma laughed. "Oh boy, he was having a good dream wasn't he?"

Ginny blushed darker. "Well, I, I mean ... I've never ... anyway, I ... well he ... he had a big sloppy grin on his face."

"Turned you on, didn't it?" Emma replied softly.

Ginny blushed a deeper shade of pink but she nodded.

"You're powers are growing, Ginevra. I told you that your senses would heighten and they are already. You could feel the power of that

dream from his mind, experience it almost as he was and you're thousands of miles away. When you actually come face to face with Harry again, the first time that you kiss is going to be the most intense experience of your life. You need to be prepared for it. Now tell me, what else happened in this dream?" Emma explained.

"Well, then the scene changed again and we were just snogging and then we were pulled into this dark hole and into a nightmare. He was reliving a horrible moment that happened to him and I wanted to scream in horror at what was happening to him and he woke up and then suddenly I couldn't see into his mind anymore and I could barely breathe because my heart was pounding so quickly. It was like, I had felt like I was actually there and then ripped out at the same time."

"That makes sense because you were there. You were there watching and seeing what he was seeing. You were also experiencing what he was experiencing. And then when Harry woke up, he was ripped from the dream and you followed suit but ripped yourself completely from his mind."

"How did I do that? I mean, I could see his dream so does that mean that I could talk to him? Or stuff?" Ginny asked.

Emma nodded. "Yes. If you've progressed this far then I have no doubt that you can make it all the way. Now that you can get into his mind, work on it when he's awake and say things or maybe think of something to show him. You will be able to send more than just words but images as well." Emma grinned. "And if I were you, I'd hold out a while and practice on the images and send him sexy things that make him crazy. He won't understand what's going on at first. If I were you, I'd send him some of your own fantasies or plays on his or memories of the two of you. It will drive him insane."

Ginny grinned. "Oh, don't worry, I planned on it."

Emma laughed. "Well, keep working on it. I'd say another week tops and you'll have it mastered. So keep working on trying to talk to, Harry. Besides, over all, I think you'll find it very educational."

Ginny smiled. "Good."

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The first day of classes went pretty well. But it was Defence Against the Dark Arts that was the talk of the school. Sirius' class was Harry's first one of the year and he was anxious to see how he would do. He wasn't disappointed. Sirius started the class by taking attendance and then asking everyone to stand up when their name was called and say something about themselves that didn't even have to be true. When everyone had looked at him funny he had simply grinned and replied:

"For example, my name is Sirius Black. I'm thirty-four years old, married, an incredible lover, a prankster, and I do enjoy pizza and a good pint of Guinness."

The class had laughed at this before playing along. He had then gone through a quick review to see where the last few professors had left off when Snape walked in. Harry had instantly caught that mischievous grin on Sirius' face.

"Why, Severus! What a wonderful surprise and during my first class too!" Sirius explained before turning to the students. "Severus and I went to school together here ... he was a git."

The class had giggled then as Snape glared.

"I see that you are still the irresponsible prat that you were in school. But that's not what I came to talk about."

"What do you want then, Snivelis?" Sirius asked.

Snape grimaced. "I need to have a private word with you during your lunch hour. It's important."

Sirius had simply nodded and agreed before telling Snape to get the hell out of his classroom so that he could teach. Snape hadn't even been gone five minutes when Lexy had come in.

"Sorry to interrupt, but I need Miss Lavender Brown for a moment."

Sirius had grinned. "Of course, Lex." Then he had walked over to her and yanked her into his arms and kissed her passionately, causing the class to whistle. When he pulled back, Lexy had smacked him in the arm.

"Prat!"

He grinned. "Love you too, honey."

Lexy rolled her eyes and headed out of the room with Lavender before Sirius went on with his lesson as if nothing had happened. Harry had to admit, it was the most interesting class he had ever had.

The day had progressed pretty normally after that with Ancient Runes in the afternoon. Both were double periods so he only had two classes. It was during his study hall period that the weirdness had started.

He was sitting in the back corner table with his Ancient Runes' homework opened in front of him when an image of a cat ran through his mind. He stopped for a moment to wonder why he would be thinking of a cat, a cat that looked an awful lot like Midnight. Then Hedwig was there, just an image that planted itself in his mind and then vanished. He closed his eyes and rubbed his forehead, wondering why he was having a weird breakdown of sorts. Ginny had both Midnight and Hedwig in New York so why was he suddenly seeing them both so clearly? Hedwig was sitting on a tall oak dresser and Midnight was laying in contentment on an ocean of a bed with red and black silk. Then the next image that crossed his mind caused him to grow hard and blush dark red. It was the image from the dream he had had the night before about he and Ginny in the woods. He closed his eyes but the image was still there with Ginny pressed against him as they kissed and he almost groaned out loud before he caught himself.

Sexual images of him and Ginny together continued to float through his mind for the rest of the evening. He was so hot by the end of the night that he could barely concentrate and turned in early but he found the images were not going away. He didn't understand why he

suddenly had sex on the brain but now that it was there it didn't seem to want to go away. It wasn't only the dream image that was there. Ginny was kissing him and running her fingers through his hair and doing things to him that he had only ever imagined. Finally he just went down into his trunk to see if being in his own private common room would allow him to concentrate. It still wasn't working and when images of Ginny barely dressed began to cross his path he did groan out loud.

He quickly undressed and headed into the bathroom, turning the water on to freezing and hoping that it would help. He stood under the spray, gasping at the touch of it on his skin. There was Ginny and he snogging; there was he and Ginny in his room at Potter Manor and his hands were under her shirt; there was Ginny flushed from his kiss; there was Ginny in a bikini sitting by the pool. Finally he couldn't take it anymore and he quickly reached down and solved the problem.

Thousands of miles away Ginny gasped and blushed furiously at what she was suddenly witnessing. She tried to pull herself from his mind after sending him all of those images of themselves to drive him crazy but she couldn't move. So she kept her eyes glued to the image of Harry that she could see in the shower. He murmured her name before he shut the shower off. She licked her lips and then thought loud and clearly: *"Wow."* And she heard the words clearly in her mind as if he was standing next to her.

*"You can say that again."*

*"Can you hear me?"* She asked.

She watched as he rolled his eyes. *"No, I'm talking to myself. Wait, damn, I am having a conversation with myself. What is going on with me today?"*

Ginny giggled and pulled herself out of his mind. She had finally succeeded and now she just had to figure out how to tell Harry that it was her and that he wasn't talking to himself and that she could see and hear everything he was doing when she concentrated her energy on his mind like that. She grinned and leaned back on the bed, her hand over her pounding heart.



Emma had been right about one thing ... this was definitely educational.

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Harry felt better later on that evening and he figured his momentary insanity was because of the need to have the woman he loved in his arms. He didn't think more of it but instead got his homework done as he listened to Ron and Hermione bicker. He watched casually as Seamus flirted with Lavender.

He didn't blame Lavender for not taking a look at Seamus. Seamus flirted with every female within a twenty kilometre radius. It was never serious, but fun and kind-hearted. But at the same time, he could see why Lavender wouldn't take him seriously. Also, they had been best friends for the last couple of years so that could be an obstacle too. He shook his head and turned back to his book.

***Meanwhile, on the other side of the common room ...***

"Look, Seamus, I'm kind of busy here doing actual homework, does this conversation actually have a purpose other than flirtation?" Lavender asked, obviously a little annoyed.

Seamus grinned. "Always does, beautiful. But if work is what you seek then I will leave you be."

Lavender rolled her eyes. "Please do."

Seamus watched as she turned her attention back to her work. He sighed inwardly. She was so beautiful. Her shoulder-length wavy blondish-brown hair was pulled back from her face and her hazel eyes were annoyed at the moment. He wondered what it was going to take for her to take him seriously. He sighed again and then took a seat in an armchair by the fire. He might as well get working on his homework. Even if it didn't look like fun.

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## Chapter 60: Playing Games Part II

**Author's Notes:** i hope this chapter is approved as i just edited it again! thanks to everyone for ur help and to Professor Scroll for informing me why the chapters needed to be fixed. i dedicate this chapter to Kate bc we were throwing ideas back and forth one day when i was in class and i dont even know what ideas are hers and which ones are mine! Kate Rocks!  
thanks, plz review!

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## Chapter LX – Playing Games Part II

Draco sat in Dumbledore's office casually twiddling his thumbs. He was trying to be calm and collected and to act like he really didn't care what was going to happen to him, but he was nervous. He had spent one sleepless week in a dorm with Crabbe and Goyle hoping that nothing would happen. Nothing had of course but he didn't know whether to be relieved or even more worried. Then he had been summoned out of Potions class for a meeting with Dumbledore. He looked up when the office door opened.

"Good afternoon, Draco," Dumbledore said as he took a seat behind his desk. "How are you doing today?"

Draco shrugged. "Fine. You wanted to see me, Professor?"

Dumbledore nodded. "I did. I have a few things to discuss with you. First of all, I have some bad news."

Draco glanced up in alarm. "What kind of bad news?"

"Vincent Crabbe and Gregory Goyle have officially joined Voldemort's ranks. It is now known for certain."

He nodded. "Yeah, I figured that they would."

"There's something else. Miss Parkinson also seems to be officially

involved. I do not know if she has become a Death Eater as well but she is involved somehow. This leaves you in quite a predicament.”

“I suppose.”

Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled. “No, you don’t suppose, you know. Now as Headmaster of this school even knowing what I do about the students’ activities, I cannot expel them or force them to leave as in school they have not done anything wrong. However, I do know to be cautious of them; which is why I will be splitting up the sixth year boys’ dormitory in Slytherin house.”

“How?” Draco asked.

Dumbledore smiled. “This castle is very large Mr. Malfoy and the Slytherin’s home has many unused rooms. There are charms over the doors to keep them hidden when we do not need them. You, Mr. Zabini, and Mr. Nott will be moved into another room while Mr. Crabbe and Mr. Goyle will stay in the dorm you have now. I have house elves as we speak moving out your belongings. I have already spoken to Mr. Nott and to Mr. Zabini who agree that they too, do not want to share a room with them.”

Draco nodded. “Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. Second, Mr. Potter informs me that you are to join the DA this year?”

“Yes I am.”

Dumbledore smiled. “I think that it’s an extraordinary club and I’m pleased that Harry is interested in making it official. Professor Black plans to help conduct it as the club will most likely be split into two levels. I want to see you do your best in the club. You’re a very talented young wizard, Draco, and I think that your power is stronger because you know right from wrong.”

Draco nodded. “Yes sir.”

“Thirdly, James Potter has informed me that you are looking for a way

out of your betrothment to Miss Parkinson?”

“I was well ... I was hoping.”

“I do not know what the stakes were when it was done for you. But I can tell you that James, will do everything in his power to find a way for you to get out of it. He understands the pureblood line well. His parents were in love with Lily and she was muggleborn but it didn’t stop them from commenting on the lack of bloodline. Andrew and Gwen Potter however, never cared about such a thing, unlike some pureblood families. You have a good friend in James and Harry and as long as you keep that, you’ll be safe.” Dumbledore explained.

“Thank you, sir, and I do appreciate what Mr. Pot – James, is doing for me.” Draco replied.

Dumbledore smiled. “Good. Now why don’t you head down to the Slytherin common room and a house elf named Hazy should be waiting for you to show you the way to your new room.”

Draco nodded and stood up. “Thank you, sir.”

Dumbledore simply nodded, his eyes twinkling. “You’re welcome.”

Draco headed downstairs and he was half-way to the Slytherin common room when he walked head long into somebody and almost fell over. He caught himself, but the person he hit wasn’t nearly as lucky. Piles of books had been flown across the floor and he saw a head of long curly shining black hair. He fell to his knees and began to gather the books.

“I’m terribly sorry. I wasn’t watching where I was going.” He replied.

“So I noticed,” she responded as she gathered her things and carefully put them back into her knapsack. She didn’t look up at him as she spoke. “You should be more careful, the school doesn’t revolve around you.”

“Excuse me?” Draco asked, his voice dripping in insult. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

The girl carefully tied her bag up, still not looking at him. "Oh, please, you think that I don't know who you are? You're Draco Malfoy, heir to god knows what, but you strut around thinking that you're all that! Well, you're not all that!" She stood up, flinging her hair over her shoulder and Draco gasped.

She was incredibly beautiful. Her long black curly hair hung down past her shoulders and she had dark grey eyes, a cute little nose and dimples in her cheeks. She was so small; maybe 5'3 and she had a small spray of freckles across her nose. He wondered why he had never seen her before. He simply swallowed and then remembered that she had just been insulting him.

"You don't even know me!" He demanded.

She rolled her eyes. "I know your type. Besides, if even half of what Pansy says is true, I don't want to know you. Now excuse me, I have to go down to the library." She went to hurry past him and he grabbed her arm. "Let go of me!"

Draco released her. "Listen, anything Pansy says is a lie. She's a cow and ... hell it's not important. Who are you anyway?"

"A mere half-blood, so apparently *beneath* you." She sneered.

"Why are you being so cold?" He asked.

She laughed. "Me cold? As if you don't know!"

He looked puzzled. "I don't. Who are you?"

"Delilah Knight. Ring any bells?" He continued to look puzzled and she gave a cold laugh. "Doesn't it just figure? Miriam Knight? Does that ring a bell? You know the woman who lived in your home? Who died in your home?"

Draco paled then and took a step back. "I had nothing to do with that."

Delilah sneered. "It doesn't matter. What matters is that she's dead. And I'm sure you're just the same as your father so you might as well have killed her!" She turned and stormed off, leaving him standing there lost in thought.

He continued on his way to the Slytherin common room, lost in memories. He did indeed know who Miriam Knight was. He stopped and leaned back against the stone wall, closing his eyes and he remembered.

*"Mother, why can't I go down and play in the dungeons? I like to pretend I'm a prisoner or a knight." A young Draco asked at eight years old.*

*Narcissa Malfoy shook her head. "Because, Draco, your father is doing business down there."*

*"But I promise I'll be quiet and besides the dungeon is so big, he'll never even know that I'm there."*

*"I said no."*

*"Please Mother, there's nothing else to do."*

*"DRACO! What did I just say?" Narcissa demanded giving him a small slap across his head.*

*Draco nodded and hurried out of the room but instead of going somewhere else he snuck down into the dungeons with his pretend sword. He heard loud voices but he continued down anyway and hid behind a door to see what his father was doing.*

*Lucius was standing in one of the dungeons with five other men. Draco knew them all as they came to the house often; Victor Crabbe, John Goyle, David Avery, Amycus Carrow, and Walden Macnair. They were all talking amongst themselves. He slid into a little cubby hole in the corner where he watched them. He liked to spy on them and pretend that he was grown-up and part of the group. That was when he noticed the woman.*

*She had long dark brown hair and dark grey eyes. She was chained to the wall in the back and he wondered what she had done wrong that his father thought she should be a prisoner. She was naked and her body was covered in bruises. He tore his gaze away when he heard his father speak.*

*“Now, now boys, we all know the rules. I believe, Miriam here, should get first pick. What do you say, sweetheart?” Lucius asked, running his fingers through her matted hair almost lovingly. “Who do you want to go first?”*

*Miriam glanced up from where she was chained. “Piss off!” Then she spit in his face.*

*“Why you little bitch!” Lucius exclaimed as he backhanded her across the face. “Show some respect.”*

*“To who? You? You’re a disgusting and foul-mouthed creature and if my husband ever finds out that I’m here he’s going to kill you.”*

*Lucius laughed. “Oh? Jonathon Knight is going to kill me? He just might stab me with his quill, I suppose ... but I’ll have my fun with you first.” He kicked out with his leg and she collapsed to her knees, scraping them on the rough floor. He laughed. “Now be a good bitch and do what you’re told!”*

*Miriam glared up at him. “I’d rather be sick.”*

*Lucius punched her in the head. “NOW!”*

*Draco’s eyes widened from his hiding spot as he watched the woman glare up at his father. But she did what she was told. Macnair was last to take her and afterwards he yanked her back up to her feet and squeezed her hips.*

*“Muggleborn bitches like you make me sick.”*

*She grinned. “You didn’t seem to mind a moment ago when I –”*

*He backhanded her before she could finish her sentence. “You shut*

*your hole! Come here, Goyle, you show her what happens when she doesn't behave."*

*Goyle went up to stand in front of her and what he did next caused Draco to throw up quietly in the corner as he watched. Why wasn't anyone helping her? She was so hurt and she had tears in her eyes. He watched as everyone left the room after what he thought had been hours. He wiped vomit from his lip and brought his knees to his chest before he began to rock back and forth. His father was now alone with her. Surely his father would help her now. But his eyes widened instead at what he saw.*

*Lucius gripped her hips tightly. "This will be my pleasure, Mrs. Knight." When she screamed he grinned. "Good, scream louder. It makes it feel better." She continued to shriek in pain as he raped her. He stepped back and used a cleansing charm on himself when he was finished.*

*"Go to hell, Malfoy!"*

*He slapped her and then he touched the blood dripping from her lip. "As long as you come with me, baby. Look at this, Mudblood ... it's not even pure, its mudblood and its disgusting." He spit on her and then he pulled out his wand. "Let me tell you this much, though, you were one hell of a good shag." He slid his fingers gently through her hair. "And that pretty little girl of yours, I bet she'll be real pretty when she grows up."*

*Miriam's eyes flashed. "You stay the hell away from my daughter!"*

*Lucius grinned. "Or what? When she gets older, or hell maybe even now ... I'll show her how good I was to her mother." Then he raised his wand and pointed it at her heart. "Avada Kedavra!" A jet of green light came barrelling out of his wand and her bloody and battered body fell back against the stone wall. Lucius snapped his fingers and one of the house elves, Goody, appeared.*

*"Yes, master?"*

*"Get rid of the body." Then he turned and walked away, not knowing*



*that a small boy sat huddled in a secret passage way with silent tears pouring from his eyes as he looked at the woman with a small pool of vomit next to him. He closed his eyes, but he never forgot her face. Just as he never forgot the faces of the other women he knew his father and his friends played with and killed. He knew of at least six but Miriam Knight's face stayed in his mind longer because it was his own father who had held the wand.*

Draco pulled himself out of the memory and looked down the hall where Delilah had last been and he groaned. She had every right to hate him, especially if she knew about it. But if she did, then why hadn't his father ever been punished? Stupid question, he thought. His father managed to wiggle out of everything. Besides, when he got rid of the body he got rid of the evidence.

Draco shook his head from the memories and continued on his way to the common room. He was drudging up his past and that was the last thing he needed. Right now, he just needed to find his new room. That was what was important.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ginny sat on her bed, thinking about how she had slowly been torturing Harry all week with her sexy images. She felt guilty for sharing Harry's dream with Emma when she had first seen into his mind. But she had done it out of impulse and ... well she would tell him and she hoped he wouldn't be too angry. Though she knew that if the tables had been turned she would most certainly be angry. She had mastered it now and she knew that Harry was incredibly confused as to what was going on. She was telling jokes and sending images and sending songs and all sorts of things into his mind but she still didn't know how she was going to tell him. How did one explain this sort of thing? Then she grinned and quickly jumped out of bed to grab some parchment.

She had the perfect plan.

\*\*\*\*\*

Late one evening, Harry sat in Sirius' office watching his godfather

sort through a pile of papers, grinning. "Enjoy being a professor?"

Sirius grinned. "You know, I actually do. I wasn't sure what I would think of it, but I like it. AH! Here we are." He pulled out the piece of parchment that he was looking for. "This is a list of basic spells, jinxes, and hexes. I was thinking you could go through it and tell me what you've already taught to the DA. Because since it's now open to new members we will have to split the DA up into two groups, one will be the advanced one and people will be able to move from one group to another."

Harry nodded. "That makes sense. And I was thinking along the same lines. I'd like to get it started as soon as we could."

"Me too, I think it will be fun. I figured since you're the one who started the club you'll be the principal teacher, I'll just be there to help out since its such a large group." Sirius explained.

"Alright, that works." Harry looked over the list and put a check mark next to all the ones he had done. "Here."

Sirius briefly looked it over. "Good. Okay, why don't you post the notice tomorrow and we'll go for Wednesday night in the great hall?"

Harry nodded. "Sounds good. I'm glad to have this going again. It will take my mind off of things."

Sirius leaned back in his chair. "Speaking of things ... how are you doing?"

Harry shrugged. "As well as can be, I guess."

"That's the sorriest excuse I've ever heard."

"Well, I miss her. I just ... I miss having her around; hearing her voice; holding her; kissing her; I just miss her." Harry explained.

Sirius nodded. "I know. Ginny's quite amazing and just think when she comes back you can have an incredible reunion."

Harry laughed. "Yeah ... I've been thinking about that."

Sirius cocked his head. "Oh, you have, have you?"

Harry blushed. "I – Uncle Sirius can I ask you a question?"

"Always, what's up?"

Harry fidgeted in his chair for a moment. "Have you ever ... this is going to sound completely crazy ... but have you ever had ideas or thoughts or hell fantasies in your mind that you knew weren't yours?"

Sirius raised his eyebrow in surprise. "Okay ... yes this does sound crazy. Voldemort?"

Harry shook his head. "No ... I know it's not him because it feels normal when they come but they aren't there all the time. Just every once and a while I get this feeling and then an image or a sentence or even songs sometimes just pop into mind. Two weeks ago all of these sex images were there and afterwards I was so bloody ... well, you get my point."

Sirius glanced at Harry quizzically. "The ideas aren't yours? So you're what, having conversations with yourself?"

Harry shrugged. "I thought so, but I don't know how it's happening. Something's up and its really starting to drive me crazy."

"These sexual images that you've been having, what do you mean by that?"

"Just you know, images of me and Ginny doing ... stuff."

Sirius wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "What kind of stuff?"

"I'm not telling you that!"

Sirius laughed. "Harry, do we need to have another talk?"

Harry laughed. "No! I just ... okay, I'm just going crazy!"

Sirius nodded. "I don't know. Wait a few days and if its still there I'll talk to James and Dumbledore and Moony and we'll see if we can figure it out."

"Alright."

"So have you heard from Ginny lately?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, she writes about once a week. These long letters that are like ten pages long, explaining every detail. I love that she writes just like she talks to so it's almost as if she's here. Colin, Dee, Luna, Hermione, and Molly have been getting letters just as long. I bet she writes to all of her brothers too."

Sirius grinned. "She's got a big heart. She writes to me too. Have you heard from James lately?"

Harry shook his head. "Not in about a week why?"

Sirius shrugged. "No special reason. It's just that he's alone in that house again. Remus and Tonks have got their own place and he's all by himself."

"Yeah, well, maybe he's still sneaking off to wherever it is he goes."

"What are you talking about?" Sirius asked, his eyes meeting Harry's in surprise.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Come on, haven't you noticed? I've known since I was like six but it's just been lately that I've really started to notice. Da disappears somewhere for long periods of time and when he comes back he always looks exhausted and depressed. He comes up with dumb excuses about work too."

Sirius nodded. "You know, now that you mention it, James does do that. Hell, he has always done that, well, since I got out of prison anyway."

Harry nodded. "I know, but ever since I had that dream about Mum,

it's as if he's been going more. I asked him about it and he said that no one would understand. I wonder what kind of secret he's keeping."

Sirius shrugged. "I have no idea. But all secrets have to come out at some time. Alright, well that's enough of the puzzlement of trying to understand your father. Why don't you head down to the common room and I'm going to go pry Lex away from whatever she's doing?"

"Alright, good night, Uncle Sirius."

"Night Harry. Let me know if those sexual images get any more intense, eh?"

Harry rolled his eyes. "Yeah, right. See you." He headed back to the common room and grinned at Ron who he met in the doorway. "Prefect duties complete?"

Ron rolled his eyes. "She's even worse this year, Harry! She wants us to patrol every single corridor and classroom in the castle. I can't take it! Why am I prefect again?"

Harry laughed. "Because you were chosen as one. Come on, that's just the way Hermione is. You're used to it."

He sighed. "I know. Well, want to get a start on Snape's essay?"

"Not really but I'm thinking we don't have much choice."

Ron grinned. "We could play chess?"

Harry yawned. "Maybe. Until Hermione catches us."

"Oh yeah."

Harry laughed as they headed up the stairs to their dormitory. "Potions essay is probably best, less nagging."

Ron grinned. "Good point, mate."

Harry grinned when he saw Hedwig sitting on his bed. "Hey girl. I

missed you.” He sat down on the bed and Hedwig nuzzled her head into his hand. “I’ve got a treat for you, beautiful, just give me a second.” He reached into his trunk to pull out some owl treats and he held them out for her. “Have you been taking good care of Ginny?” Hedwig hooted softly and Harry grinned giving her a second treat. “That’s my girl. Do you have a letter for me or are you just here for a visit?” Hedwig dutifully held out her leg and Harry untied the letter.

“Is it from Ginny?” Ron asked.

Harry nodded. “Yeah.” He opened the parchment and to his surprise found the shortest letter he had ever received from Ginny.

**Harry,**

**I’m doing well but I have something to show you. It’s very hard to explain and you’re going to think I’m crazy but here I go. I want you to sit somewhere quiet and concentrate hard on an image of me. Once you can see me clearly in your mind I want you to say these words in your mind not out loud:**

***Ginny, I just got your letter and am following your instructions.***

**Can you do it?**

**Thanks. I love you.**

**Love,  
Ginny**

Harry re-read the letter twice but he was still frowning in confusion. What was the point of this little experiment?

“Everything alright, mate?” Ron asked.

Harry nodded. “Yeah, yeah. Ginny just wants me to work on something with my magic here. I’ll meet you downstairs in a bit.”

Ron nodded. “Sure, mate, but if you’re any more than an hour I’ll have to kill you for leaving me alone to do the essay.”

Harry grinned. "Yeah, see you."

He waited until Ron left the room and then he pulled his feet up onto his bed and closed his bed curtains around him. He lied down and closed his eyes bringing an image of Ginny to his mind. He thought of how she looked when he had first kissed her. Her eyes were dark chocolate in arousal and surprise and how her hair was rich and flowing like fire in his hands. When the image was clear in his mind he thought the words that Ginny had asked him to.

*"Ginny, I just got your letter and am following your instructions. Did I mention how incredibly stupid I feel at the moment?"*

*"No, I don't believe you did."*

Harry bolted up into a sitting position instantly at the words. What was going on?

*"Harry, it's me, really. I know you think that you're going crazy, but your not."*

*"Okay, if I was crazy, that was the first thing I would think I'd hear."*

He heard a giggle that sounded oddly familiar. *"You're not going crazy, I swear."*

"Ginny?" He said softly in his mind.

*"I'm here."*

He closed his eyes. *"Alright, it sounds like you and for some odd reason it feels like you ... how?"*

*"It's an ability that I developed. Telepathy. I couldn't explain it in a letter."*

Harry grinned. *"I guess not. Am I really talking to you in my mind?"*

*"Yes. I figured out that I could do it and I talked to Emma and she*

*said that since I was so good at it I could probably communicate with you from here. It worked. I can send words and images and songs and everything.” She explained.*

Harry tilted his head to the side at that. *“Oh, you can, can you? Ginevra Molly Weasley! Have you been sending all of those naughty images to me?”*

He felt her blush and wondered how he could do so. *“Yes. I was experimenting.”*

He grinned. *“Experimenting, alright! Do you have any idea the hell I was going through? I thought I was going bloody insane! I even talked to Sirius about it today and he didn’t understand either! He asked me if I needed another talk! You’re a vindictive little wench, aren’t you?”*

He heard her laugh and the sound made him sigh with pleasure. *“It was fun and I didn’t know how to just talk to you. I thought that you would think you were going crazy.”*

*“So you sent me naughty images to make my blood run hot?”*

*“Yes.”*

*“Ginny?”*

*“Yeah?”*

*“How can I talk back to you?” He asked.*

*“Because you’re powerful. I told Emma that you’re a powerful wizard, I didn’t explain of course, but because you are she said that you would be able to communicate back as long as I initiated the conversation. You’ll have to practice yourself to try to start the conversation with me. But also because while we’re talking like this, we’re connected mentally. Since I initiated the conversation I can see you, almost like I’m sitting on your bed but at the same time I can see in your mind as well. Does that make sense?” She explained.*



Harry shook his head. *"I don't know. So if I learn how to do this and I initiate the conversation with you, will I see you?"*

*"I don't think so. You can see into my mind only. I think that I can see more because of my empathic abilities. Emma explained that we have more sight and can see beyond the mind because of the power. You will be able to see all of my thoughts but not me."*

He nodded. *"That's neat, but it kind of sucks that I can't see you. I miss you."*

*"I miss you, too. Harry, I need to tell you something very ... embarrassing and I really hope that you won't get angry at me, but if you do, well, I'll understand."*

Harry looked puzzled for a moment. *"What's up, Gin?"*

*"Well, the first time that I actually managed to make contact with you I ran into Armand, your lion elemental. He was busy guarding your mind but he allowed me entry because he knew who I was and that I was important to you. He then gave instructions to the rest of your elementals to let me by."*

*"Really?"* Harry asked. *"Wow, that's neat and cool that they know me enough to do that."*

*"Yes. I asked Emma about it, but I just told her that you could do Occulmency and she said that since you made the walls or the blocks that it would be a part of you so you knew and accepted me on a conscious level even if you still didn't know I was there. I assumed the elementals worked the same way."*

He nodded. *"That makes sense. Okay, go on."*

She took a deep breath and he grinned when he heard it. It was weird to be able to hear her but not see her but at the same time he could feel her. He couldn't explain it. *"Alright, so the first night I got into your mind it was late and I didn't expect to actually make contact with you right away. Well, it was the first night of school and you were dreaming so I saw you sleeping in your bed in Gryffindor Tower and*

*then suddenly I was sucked into your mind. It was weird at first because I was in your dream and I could see and feel and experience everything that you were in your dream. You were dreaming about me."*

Harry grinned. *"Oh, yeah? Was it a good dream?"*

*He felt her blush again. "We were kissing and I remember thinking that it was kind of erotic to watch us kissing. Then the scene changed and we were walking through the woods. You pushed me up against the tree to kiss me and I ... well in your dream I ... I mean we ... well ..."*

Harry blushed now. *"I remember."*

*"Yes, well ... I was surprised I mean I've never ... well that's beside the point. So your dream continued and then it was about the graveyard and Voldemort was there and he was ... well, you were under the Cruciatus and I could hear you screaming and then I screamed and then suddenly you bolted awake and I was yanked from your dream and from your mind. I found myself sitting on my bed breathing heavy and I hurt all over as if I had really been under the curse. It only lasted a few moments and then I went into the kitchen to get a glass of water. I was still so wrapped up in the idea that I had actually been in your mind. Emma was sitting in the kitchen and she asked what was up so I told her about what had happened. Everything that happened because I wanted to learn more about it and why and how."*

Harry nodded. *"Alright ... I'm not getting to the embarrassment part unless it's that you saw my dream which yeah and ... wait, you told Emma everything?"*

*"Yes."*

He gulped. *"Even the details of my dream."*

*"Well, not the part about Voldemort."*

*"GINNY!"*

*"I know. I'm sorry, Harry! I didn't have the right and I know it but I just ... I felt so much and I felt everything that my dream self was experiencing and I wanted to know why I could feel it? Why I felt like I was there? Why I was experiencing all these emotions? I'm sorry."*

He sighed. *"It's alright; I know why you did it. It doesn't make it much better of course. That was my private dream and you had no right to tell Emma about it! I don't mind so much that you saw it, I mean you were in it, but I ... you had no right!"*

*"I know. I can't say sorry anymore."*

He nodded. *"Alright. So after that, what happened?"*

*"Well, I talked to Emma some more about what I had felt and if she thought that it meant that I could communicate with you mentally. Emma said yes but I had to practice and she suggested images and pictures and things. It was her that gave me the idea to send you those naughty images. I pulled from your dream, my own dreams, some novels and movies. It was fun. But I have one more confession to make that I must say is embarrassing for both of us."*

*"Spill it, Ginny."*

*"Okay, I'm just going to say this really fast because I ... well because. Alright, it was the second time I tried to communicate with you and I was sending images and stuff and you went really crazy and locked yourself in your trunk and then you took a shower and I tried to leave then, but I ended up staying because I just couldn't take my eyes away and you were ... I'm so ashamed."*

He could feel her face turning bright red and he himself blushed when he realized what she was talking about. *"You, uh, you saw me ... in the shower? Oh, boy."* He was silent for a moment. *"And?"*

*"And what?"* She asked.

He grinned wickedly. Two could play at this game. *"What did you think of what you saw?"*

He felt her blush again. *"Well I ... I mean I never expected ... it was ... it made me ... you were so ... hmm."*

He grinned. *"If you wanted to watch, Gin, all you had to do was ask."*

*"HARRY!"* She exclaimed and he knew that her face was scarlet.

He laughed. *"Well, I'm just glad to know that I am not going insane. Wait, did you tell Emma about ... in the shower?"*

*"NO!"* Ginny exclaimed. *"Harry, I would never do that. It was only the first time and I didn't mean to, I just ... I'm so sorry."*

*"It's alright, Ginny. I forgive you, stop worrying."* He sighed. *"It's nice to talk to you like this. In my mind I mean."*

*"Yes it is. I miss you but I'm learning so much here. I'm working on wandless magic now."*

He nodded. *"That's what your last letter said. How's it coming along?"*

*"Good. I can light fires now and levitate things and summon small things. Emma and I are going through my first year charms book to go over simple spells and work on doing them without my wand. It was hard at first but it's getting easier. I really like it and I'm so glad I came."*

He smiled. *"I'm glad."*

*"What's going on at home? How's Malfoy?"*

*"Draco's doing alright. Dumbledore moved him, Zabini, and Nott into their own dorm as it's now official that Crabbe and Goyle are Death Eaters. He seems to be doing okay with everything. I'm starting the DA back up this week and Uncle Sirius is going to help me. It's going to be an official club open to anyone who is interested. Draco's joining as well. Ron and Hermione are still bickering like crazy and I'm ashamed to say that I've actually been avoiding them just so I don't have to listen to it."*

He heard her laugh. *"I don't blame you. I just wish that they would snog already!"*

He laughed. *"I agree. Well, it's interesting anyway. Colin and Dee are doing good, as well. Colin says it's quieter without you."*

*"Hey!"* She exclaimed. *"I think I should be offended by this!"*

Harry laughed. *"Maybe, but it's true. I really miss you, Gin. I can't believe it's already almost been two months."*

*"I know. I miss you too. Oh, Emma just came in and she said that I have to go practice my wandless magic now. But I'll talk to you later. You work on trying to communicate with me."*

*"How do I do it?"* He asked.

*"Just do something similar as to what you did to get a hold of me. It will be harder though as I won't be waiting for it like I was today, which is how I initiated the conversation. Just concentrate on my image and you can send words and everything."*

He grinned. *"Alright. Thanks, Gin, I love you."*

He felt her smile. *"I love you, too. Goodnight."*

And then she was gone from his mind and he felt a light emptiness. He sighed. He really missed her.

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## Chapter 61: A Hard Life

**Author's Notes:** ur gonna kill me for the ending i kno - but it was kate's idea - haha - i dedicate this chapter to her and to saz who has created some awesome blends that amused me yay! plz review

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## **Chapter LXI – A Hard Life**

James looked up from the papers that he was reading when he heard voices in the entrance way. He grinned when Sirius and Remus stepped into the living room.

“Hey, you two, this is a surprise! Taking time out of your busy lives to come visit me, eh?”

Sirius grinned. “Well, we tried. Jeesh, those papers look evil.”

James rolled his eyes. “King, man he gave me a stack of them tonight.”

“Ouch. Better you than me.”

Remus laughed. “Figures, I bet you don’t even give out too many assignments just because you don’t want to mark them.”

Sirius shrugged. “Why should I have to suffer through homework all over again?”

James snorted. “Never mind. So what brings you two by?”

“Actually, James, we wanted to talk to you.” Remus replied as he took a seat on the couch next to his friend.

James nodded. “About what?”

Sirius sighed as he sat down. “Well, I had a chat with Harry and he mentioned that you were pulling your disappearing act again and how you said that no one would understand. Where the hell are you disappearing to, Prongs? I’m tired of trying to make excuses for you in something that I don’t understand. And I’m tired of making excuses for you to Harry, because he’s gets this look in his eyes ... I don’t want to disappoint him.”

James sighed. “You guys wouldn’t understand, alright. It’s my thing, why does it matter what I’m doing?”

"Because it's starting to affect your life and those around you, James," Remus replied softly. "I know that you use to go out after Lily ... you were gone for hours at a time. You always have, but I never questioned you. Lately however, you're gone more often and you ... you come home looking exhausted and depressed. It's not only Harry that's noticed, James."

Sirius nodded. "Harry's not a kid anymore either. If you're out whoring around, just tell him. When's the last time that you've been with a woman, James? If you're paying for it, none of us can fault you."

James didn't meet Sirius' eyes then but he nodded. "Yeah, I didn't think that you'd understand."

"So it's true? You've just been out whoring?" Sirius asked.

James nodded. "Yeah ... well, like you said. It's been quite a while. It seemed ... wrong and I thought that you would look down upon me for it."

Remus placed his hand on his friend's shoulder. "That wasn't so hard was it?"

James grinned. "No, I'm glad that you guys know. But I have to get going. I have a late night meeting tonight. Kingsley had me bring home all of this paperwork to go over ahead of time. This doesn't reassure me in any way."

Sirius laughed. "Knowing Shacklebolt, you're probably in for a long one."

"That's what I'm afraid of. Talk to you guys later." He picked up his papers and hurried out of the room. When they heard him Apparate away Sirius turned to Remus.

"Whoring around, Moony? That's something I'd resort to. Did you believe him?"

Remus shook his head. "Not a word."

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Draco stood outside in the courtyard next to Harry, Blaise, Ted, Seamus, Neville, Dean, and Ron. They were discussing some key elements of the upcoming DA meeting and filling Draco in on what they had learned the following year. Draco didn't want to be impressed but he was. They had learned some serious spells and he knew from his father that they had held their own at the Department of Mysteries in June. He looked up when he heard Hermione yell out a hello to them.

"Hey Hermione, did we drag you away from studying?" Ron asked.

Hermione glared at him. "Honestly Ron, N.E.W.T.s are only one year away! It's not my fault if I want to be prepared."

"Prepared? You're more prepared than any of us but you never think that you're ready! And not to mention the crazy increase in the prefect duties!" Ron declared. "You just keep going on and on about how we have to patrol this and then we have to do this! I'm tired of it! And it's only September!"

"And they're off," Blaise murmured in Harry's ear making him grin. He wondered if his two best friends would ever stop arguing.

Hermione's eyes flashed angrily. "Well, I want to do a good job, Ronald! Something you obviously have no desire to accomplish! Half the time I don't even know why Dumbledore gave you that badge!"

"Yeah, well you know what I think? I think that you're a –"

"Oh, shut up and snog already!" Draco exclaimed.

Ron and Hermione both turned scarlet.

"Yeah, you heard me. You two are driving me bonkers! And I don't even hang out with you! Merlin knows how Potter hasn't locked you two in a room by now! Just snog or shag or something! Get the tension out of your system so we don't have to listen to it!" Draco



demanded.

Ron's mouth dropped open and closed again and he shook his head. "That's ... you're being ... it's ... ridiculous."

Hermione rolled her eyes and stomped away causing Ron to hurry after her.

Dean laughed. "Oh, Malfoy, that was so good. Those two drive everyone insane!"

Harry grinned. "I'm glad to say that after six years I can almost tune them out."

Seamus grinned. "Draco does have a point though. They need to snog. Hey, who wants to place a bet on how long it will take them?"

Harry laughed. "Sure, why not? I'll bet ... twenty galleons that they'll realize they want each other before Christmas!"

Draco nodded. "Twenty it is, but I say before Halloween."

Blaise laughed. "Valentine's Day."

"Next year," Dean replied with a grin.

"New Year's Eve," Ted suggested.

Neville laughed. "Well ... I'm going to say the weekend."

Seamus grinned. "Go Nev! Alright, I'm going with middle of November. Whoever is closest gets the cash?" Everyone nodded and Seamus grinned. "Excellent. Now if those two don't drive us batty first, I think it's worth our money."

Dean snorted. "It's only been six years!"

Harry nodded. "Don't remind me! Well, I've got an essay to write for tomorrow so I better get started since we've got the DA meeting later. Talk to you later." He hurried off, shaking his head at the idea that he

had just bet money on how long it would take his two best friends to snog. He grinned; life was just full of surprises.

He left them in the courtyard but he didn't go to work on his essay. He instead went into his trunk and sat comfortably in the middle of the bed. He closed his eyes and brought an image of Ginny to his mind. He thought about her gorgeous hair and her big brown eyes and when he could see her clearly, he focused on her temples. He brought back his Legilimency lessons and tried to look into the image that he had produced of her and therefore into her mind. The harder he concentrated, the more the sweat dripped down his forehead. He stripped of his tee-shirt so that he would be cooler and concentrated harder.

His magic bubbled a bit and shot out like lightning but nothing happened. He couldn't feel her in his mind like he had during their one night of conversation. He had been trying to bring her back for a week now and had come up empty handed. He sighed and leaned back against the bed post when a thought suddenly entered his brain. He wondered how he had been so stupid as to not consider it before. His elementals!

He quickly called forth Armand the lion and explained how he wanted to telepathically communicate with Ginny as she had with him but he didn't know how. Armand had grinned and said that he would see to it. A few seconds later he found his mind moving along a white tunnel and following Armand who led the way and then he saw familiar brown depths and then he could feel Ginny. He couldn't see anything except that in his mind and in his heart, he could feel her.

*"Gin? I think I did it."* He said in his mind.

*"Harry?"*

*"No, it's the Easter Bunny!"*

He felt her roll her eyes. *"Prat! You did it! I'm so proud of you! Can you see me, though?"*

*"No, I can just feel you. It's like a comforting sensation and a familiar*

*one because I know that you're there. Does that make sense?" He asked.*

*"Yes. I can see you, of course, but that has to be because of my empathic abilities. I'll ask Emma about it. You are currently sitting on a large bed in a room that I have never seen before and without a shirt."*

*He laughed. "I'm in my trunk and I don't have a shirt on because when I was concentrating on trying to talk to you I was sweating. It's intense this mind magic stuff."*

*"It is I know. So did you have something particular to tell me?"*

*He shook his head as he pulled his shirt back over his head. "Not really. I just missed you."*

*"I miss you too. I've been doing really well with the wandless magic now. There's not really anything else for me to learn in the wandless magic category except for any new spells that I cover in school."*

*"That's brilliant! I'm so proud of you."*

*He felt her blush. "Thanks. My powers are growing definitely ... among other things. So what's going on over there? Have you re-started the DA yet?"*

*"The first meeting is tonight and it's not really official just to you know, explain to the newcomers what it is and what we'll be covering. I think it will go well. Oh! I do have something interesting to tell you, I just made a twenty galleon bet that Ron and Hermione will snog by Christmas."*

*She laughed and the sound filled his mind, making him smile. "Harry James Potter! A bet! I'm so disappointed ... I would have bet fifty galleons."*

*He laughed. "It was Seamus' idea." He quickly explained what had happened and she laughed.*

*"It's quite brilliant! I love that Draco just yelled out for them to go and snog already. Those two will drive everyone crazy!"*

Harry grinned. *"Definitely. So, not too much longer now until you're coming home? Are you happy about this?"*

He felt her sigh. *"Actually I'm kind of sad. I mean, of course I want to go home. I miss you and my friends and my family so much but it's such an adventure being out here. Emma is completely crazy and I love her. I'm beginning to view her as the older sister that I never had. And I'm learning so much! Did I tell you that I mastered my animagus transformation? I can become a fox now and just last night I accomplished the eagle!"*

*"Really? Gin, that's amazing!"*

*"The eagle only took me a week. I couldn't believe it! It was amazing and it felt so incredibly. I can fly around and it's wonderful. My magic is increasing and I'm changing."*

*"Changing?"* Harry asked, wondering what she meant by that.

He felt her blush. *"Well, I'm growing up, I guess. Emma told me when I first got here that empaths grow up and mature faster than normal once we start developing our magic. My growth has increased a lot."*

*"Growth? I'm not following this."*

*"Like my body, Harry ... it's changing. I don't look so much like a little girl anymore. I look ... grown up. I mean, I'm still growing but the changes have been pretty intense and it affects my magic and everything."* She explained.

*"Wow, that's really interesting. So now you look more beautiful than usual?"*

He felt her blush. *"Flatterer."*

*"Hey, can't kill a bloke for telling the truth."* He felt her blush deeper and he grinned. *"I can't wait to see you then. You'll be back by the*

*first of November right?" He felt her hesitate. "Ginny?"*

*"Actually Harry ... I might be staying a little longer then planned."*

*"How much longer?"*

*"Until New Year's Eve."*

*"NEW YEAR'S EVE!" He exploded. "BUT THAT'S TWO MORE MONTHS!"*

*"I know. Emma says that it's for my own good and that there are some things that I need to learn and work on that will need more time and that this will be the time for me to learn it."*

*"WHY DON'T YOU JUST FORGET WHATEVER THE HELL EMMA SAYS AND START THINKING FOR YOURSELF? DAMN IT, GIN! I WANT YOU HERE! I WANT YOU WITH ME!"*

*"AND WHAT ABOUT WHAT I WANT, HARRY? I MISS YOU SO MUCH AND I LOVE YOU BUT THIS IS A CHANCE OF A LIFETIME FOR ME! I NEED TO BE HERE AND I NEED TO LEARN! WHY ARE YOU BEING SO SELFISH?"*

*He sighed and buried his face in his hands. "I'm sorry Gin ... I just ... damn it, I miss you. I can barely stand being away from you for another month let alone three more! Okay, so I can communicate with you mentally now ... but I just I want to hold you. I want to see you. I want to kiss you."*

*"I want that too, more then anything. But I'm scared."*

*"Of what? Me? Gin, you know that I'd never hurt you. If this is about what you saw in my dream I was just –"*

*"No, that's not it."*

*"Then what is it?" He asked.*

*Ginny let out a deep sigh. "It's me ... it's hard to explain but it has to*

*do with these changes that I'm going through and my emotions and my feelings and my senses. They've magnified to a huge degree."*

"Okay ..." Harry replied.

*"When you had that dream ... I felt everything. It was so huge and so overwhelming and it wasn't even real. Emma tells me that this will increase even more when I'm actually with you and when we ... kiss and other stuff ... it's going to be so intense. I'm afraid of the feelings and I'm afraid that the feelings will be so intense that we'll rush into something that neither of us are ready for."* She replied.

Harry shook his head. *"No baby, that won't happen. I would never pressure you into doing anything and you'll know if you're ready. You'll know if you want to move further and when you don't want to all you have to do is say no. You know that I'll stop. I love you."*

He felt her smile. *"I'm not worried about you, it's me that I'm worried about."*

Harry grinned sheepishly. *"Are you going to take advantage of me?"*

He felt her laugh. *"Maybe I will and then what would you do?"*

He grinned. *"I admit it would be hard to say no."* When he felt her smile he grinned. *"Baby, I love you, and you have nothing to worry about. Alright?"*

*"Alright. I love you too."*

*"Are you alright? I just wish that I could hold you ... I always feel better when I'm holding you in my arms."*

She smiled. *"I wish you were too. I love you so much."*

Harry jolted when he heard the banging on the roof of the trunk.

"Mate, are you in there? It's time for dinner you know?" Ron's voice called out.

He sighed. "I'll be right up, Ron!" He called out. *"Damn, well according to Ron it's time for dinner but now that I know how to talk to you we'll do this more often. Have you broken the news to your parents yet about you staying longer in New York?"*

*"Not yet, I'm writing them a letter tonight."*

He nodded. *"Alright, I'll talk to you later, Gin, love you."*

She smiled. *"I love you too, bye."*

*"Um, Gin?"*

*"Yeah?"*

*"How do I get out of your mind?"*

He felt her laugh. *"That would probably be good, right? Okay, concentrate on seeing me walk away and then however you got in, use it to get out."*

Harry nodded. *"Thanks."* He focused on her retreating back and then called forth his elementals, who then shut the portal between their minds. He headed up the stairs to open the lid of the trunk for Ron. *"Hey mate."*

*"What took you so long?"*

Harry shrugged. *"I was sort of zoning out, I got no where on my essay. Is it time for dinner?"*

*"Yeah."*

*"Good I'm starved."*

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The DA meeting went really well and a huge list of students were added to the list. The meeting itself was pretty short as it was really just an explanation and an introduction as to what it was all about.

Sirius had been a big help by explaining that he would be there to help instruct when needed but that Harry was the principal teacher. Harry did notice though that there was a very beautiful girl that Draco couldn't keep his eyes off. So when the meeting was over, he pulled Draco aside.

"Hey, so what do you think?"

Draco shrugged. "It should be pretty good."

Harry grinned. "Good, so who's the beautiful girl that you haven't been able to keep your eyes off of all night?"

"What?"

Harry grinned. "You heard me. Long curly black hair, pretty grey eyes. You like her."

Draco shrugged. "Well, it doesn't matter, does it? Delilah hates my guts thanks to my father."

"Delilah? Why, what's going on with your father?" Harry asked; confusion in his voice.

"Nothing, don't worry about it, alright."

"You know, Draco; I think that we've become somewhat friends over the last few weeks. Friends talk to each other." Harry said softly as he looked over at Delilah again as she left the Great Hall.

Draco sighed. "Not about this. Talk to you later, Potter."

Harry watched him walk away and looked over when he felt a hand on his shoulder. It pleased him immensely to know that he was now tall enough that he didn't have to look up to Sirius, Remus, or James. He turned and grinned at his godfather.

"Everything alright with, Draco?" Sirius asked as he watched him walk away.



Harry shrugged. "No idea. He won't talk to me. Something to do with his father though."

"Speaking of fathers, I need to talk to you about James. Come with me to my office." Sirius replied, his tone very fitting to his name.

"What's going on?" Harry asked.

Sirius didn't answer and instead led the way to his office. Once they were inside and seated he sighed. "Remus and I went to go talk to him on the weekend to try to figure out what this secret was. We told him that we would understand and that he's hurting the people that he loves. Moony said something about James and how he had started disappearing right after Lily's death but he never thought anything of it because he figured that it was something he had to do. It's continued since then but Moony did agree with you on one thing Harry. James' weird disappearances have increased ever since you had that dream about Lily. So we confronted him."

"And?" Harry asked eagerly. "Did he tell you what's going on?"

Sirius shook his head. "I told him that you were old enough to understand Harry. I thought maybe that he was whoring around, going out and paying for sexual favours. I wouldn't blame him if he was. There hasn't been anyone since Lily and ... I told him that I didn't blame him if that's where he was going and that you were old enough to understand. He didn't meet mine or Moony's eyes when he said that he didn't think we would have understood. It was just that he hadn't been with a woman in a while. James would never whore around and I know it. I mentioned it because I thought for sure he'd get angry and when he was angry, I could find out what was going on. But he simply didn't meet our eyes and said yes, he had been out whoring."

"So he's just going out and having sex? I'm sixteen! Does he think I need to be sheltered?" Harry exclaimed.

Sirius shook his head. "That's just it, Harry. He's not. I brought up the idea because that's what I thought was the way to get the truth out of him. It was wrong. He lied to us. Moony and I know it, but we have no

idea where the hell he's been going."

Harry nodded. "I'm really starting to worry now that you say that. Da's not one to lie, especially not to his two best mates."

Sirius nodded. "I know. I'm worried too, as is Remus." He sighed. "I have a theory though."

"What is it?" Harry asked.

"I think that he's been going to Lily's grave. Don't ask me why ... I just ... I think he's been going there and if he is ... damn it, that's not healthy! I know he loved your mum Harry, but she's dead! She died and he has to get over that."

Harry nodded. "Yeah ... that's where you think he's going, really? I've asked him to take me to Mum's grave more times than I can remember and he's always avoided it."

Sirius nodded. "That's odd ... well, Remus and I decided that if we don't find out by Christmas we're going to follow him."

"Why Christmas?"

"Because we both think that that's more than enough time for him to realize that we're here for him and that he can trust us."

"Sounds good to me."

Sirius grinned. "I just thought that you should know. I know it's been bothering you for a while."

"Yeah, it has. Thanks."

"No problem. Hey, anything new with that weird image thing?" Sirius asked.

Harry laughed. "Actually ..." he trailed off as he thought about his new ability with Ginny. Did he really want anyone to know? He grinned; he would talk to Ginny about it and see. "Yeah, it's gone now. I have no

idea what was going on. Maybe I was stressed or something.”

“Uh-huh,” Sirius said with a grin. “Funny that I don’t believe you. But you’re obviously not worried about it anymore so I’ll leave it be. For now.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks. I’m not ready to share this yet.”

Sirius nodded. “No problem. I’m here when you need me.”

“Thanks. I guess I better go start that essay that Aunt Lexy assigned.”

Sirius grimaced. “An essay? Already? I better have a word with her.”

Harry laughed. “I doubt she’ll listen. Talk to you later.”

“See you, kid.”

Harry headed back to the common room, wondering if his godfather was right. *Was his father really going to visit his mother’s grave?* He sighed; he wished he knew what was going through his father’s mind at the moment. But he knew that until James was ready to share the news, they would all be kept in the dark.

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The month of September went by quickly after that and soon October was fast approaching. Quidditch practices had started up and Harry wasn’t sure what he was going to do for a chaser. They needed both beaters and two new chasers. He had been hoping that Ginny would be able to join the team but it wasn’t looking likely since she wouldn’t be back in time. In the end, as team captain he used Katie’s help to choose Seamus Finnegan and Demelza Robbins as chasers and then surprisingly, Denis and Colin Creevey for the beaters.

The DA was going surprisingly well. They met twice a week, once for the primary group and once for the advanced group. Sirius was helping by going around to help people learn the spell with Harry as he could not be there to help everyone. It went well and he was surprised at how quickly everyone was learning. He was pleased with

the club and he knew that it was well-worth his time. Draco was learning a lot as well and even though he still refused to comment on Delilah, Harry had a feeling that there was something else there, something else that was bothering him quite a bit. He figured that once Draco actually sat down and realized that he had friends now, then he would turn to him for advice.

Classes were going well and even though Harry did find a large increase in his homework, it wasn't really any harder than the year before. He figured that had a lot to do with his elementals as well. Snape was still being pretty evil and to Harry's surprise he was also being incredibly rude to Draco. He picked on him almost as much as he did Harry. He was surprised by this as Draco had always been his favourite student, but he had a feeling that Snape would see it as a way of showing that he was against his decision. Draco still didn't know anything about Snape or the Order so Snape was still pretending to be a Death Eater for Draco's eyes.

Sirius' class was still the most interesting as he was fun and worked to make the class fun. They would always spend the first half of the class making notes and having a discussion on the topic but then they would learn a spell about the defence. They would practice in pairs and at the end of every class they would have a tournament and the winner would get twenty points to their house. Everyone enjoyed his classes, especially when he was interrupted as he had fun teasing whoever entered the class. It was also interesting that Lexy and Sirius were both professors.

Harry remembered that he had arrived at DADA early one day as he wanted to talk to Sirius about the DA before class and he had found Lexy sitting on Sirius' desk, her legs wrapped around his waist as they snogged passionately. He had begun to slowly make his way out of the room when he heard Sirius suggest something outrageous to his wife ... something about locking the door and 'christening' the desk before class started. But his idea didn't happen because students began to pile in. There were loud whistles from the kiss and Sirius had grinned, yanked Lexy to her feet and dipped her before he kissed her again. The class had loved it.

Sirius was also seen as Hogwarts Sexiest Professor. Every girl in

school had a crush on him and he knew it. He was nice about it, winking and casually flirting with girls enough to make them sigh and to make his wife roll her eyes. He enjoyed it almost a little too much. He, however, was not the only one.

Harry was also having trouble with girls. With Ginny not there, girls seemed to come up with the idea that he was actually available. They flirted with him at all opportunities and some of them were even taking it to extremes. One of these girls was a fourth year named Romilda Vane. She had taken to mesmerizing Harry's timetable and falling into step with him at all opportunities. One time, she had even managed to get him alone in a locked classroom, which he still wasn't sure how that had come about. But the next thing he knew, he was pressed against a wall and she was smiling at him flirtatiously. He had slipped away from her before she tried to kiss him and hurried out of the room, throwing his arm around a surprised Lavender, who had happened to be in the hall.

He had then avoided being alone in the halls at all costs, but Hermione warned him that Romilda was looking to getting love potions. Fred and George had come up with a few ideas in that sense and Harry now had to be careful what he ate or drank as he had no idea what kind of crazy products those two were selling to the public. He was not finding it amusing.

It wasn't only Romilda either. There were quite a few girls who seemed to think that since Ginny wasn't around he would now be interested in some fun times. He wasn't sure how much longer he could stand being patient. No matter how many times he told them that he still had a girlfriend, they would not leave him alone. Hermione, Ron, and Sirius found it quite amusing and even Draco was beginning to laugh at him. He was getting incredibly frustrated and stressed over it and wondered what Ginny would think of the entire fiasco.

Cho had been casually flirting with him again as well. She wasn't insane like the rest of the girls but she was present. Just the other day she had cornered him in the Charms corridor.

"Hey, Harry."

He looked up and nodded at her. "Hi Cho. How are you?"

She smiled at him, tapping her fingers gently up his arm. "I'm doing alright. N.E.W.T.s this year and all."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I bet you're pretty busy."

"I always find time for more ... fun activities." Then she had winked at him and hurried off.

Harry figured it was best all around to avoid being alone.

As for his conversations with Ginny, they tried to communicate at least every two days, but it was hard because of the time difference and because of their busy schedules. Harry was still working on trying to pay her back for intruding on his dream and shower. His moment came when he tried to connect with her first thing in the morning before class and found her dreaming. He wasn't sure what happened at first as he could feel her but she was in an unconscious state of sorts and he was confused. Then he saw her dream.

She was lying in a hammock in the backyard of the Burrow, the breeze running through her hair, which was pinned up out of her face. She was wearing a long white flowing skirt and a brown tank top. He watched in fascination as an image of himself came out from where they usually played Quidditch. He walked over to her and just stared down.

*"You're so beautiful."*

She blushed. *"I miss you, Harry."*

He focused on the image of himself, trying to connect with it and to his surprise he was suddenly looking down at Ginny from her dream image of him. He reached out, surprised when he could feel her soft skin beneath his fingers. She smiled up at him as he climbed into the hammock with her, cuddling her into his arms. She sighed in contentment.

*"Kiss me."*

*"Always,"* he murmured as he brought her lips to his.

The kiss was long and sweet and it made him ache. He was inside of her mind therefore he could feel her emotions from the kiss and not to mention what it was doing to him. He slid his hands down her arms and under her tank top. He stroked her softly and she moaned in his mouth. His other hand slid down, beneath her skirt to rub gently along her thigh making her gasp and tug desperately at his shirt. Then their hands and lips were on each other as the hammock swayed gently in the breeze. Ginny let out a loud moan and nibbled gently on his earlobe and Harry groaned, burying his face in her hair.

Ginny arched beneath him, stroking her hands over his bare back and gasping at the emotions that were running through her. She had dreamed intense before but this was overwhelming, she couldn't breathe, she could barely move. She could feel Harry and taste him and smell him. It was so different from her other dreams. His hand moved over her skin and she gasped, dragging her fingers up into his hair and pulling his mouth to hers.

Just as Harry dropped his head down to her exposed skin, gliding his lips down her throat she bolted awake. Her heart was pounding in her chest and she ached all over in a good way of course. She ran her fingers through her hair, surprised to feel like she could still feel Harry's presence and then she saw his wicked grin float across her mind.

*"Interesting dream, Gin."*

*"Harry James Potter! Were you just in my dream?"*

Harry grinned wickedly. *"I think that I was participating in your dream. Funny, how elementals can help me do just about anything."*

*"Evil."*

He grinned. *"Hey, payback time, love."*

*"Hmm ... just remember who my brothers are and that revenge is just as sweet."*

His eyebrow rose slightly at the tone. *"Oh? Do you not think that I had the right, love?"*

She sighed. *"I suppose you did. Besides it was ... so ..."*

*"Real?"* He supplied. *"I noticed. My palms are sweating and I'm so bloody – well you get my point. Merlin, you looked amazing."*

She blushed. *"Thank you. It's not quite what I look like now of course, funny that I would dream myself a bit different."*

*"You looked amazing, incredible really and just like usual."*

*"Now, you're talking crazy. But I do love flattery. So what are you doing, Mr. Potter, waking me up in the middle of the night?"*

He grinned. *"Its morning for me."*

*"Uh-huh."*

He laughed. *"Just thought that I'd try to pay you back and I say that I did fine."*

*"Mmm, and interrupted my beauty sleep. But I suppose that I can forgive you since my dream was so good."*

*"And so sadly interrupted."*

She laughed. *"Yes."*

*"Sorry to run off, but I have to head down to breakfast and then go to class. Miss you."*

*"Love you. Good night, Harry."*

*"Love you too and goodnight, Gin."*



He disappeared from her mind and she grinned, laying back down and sighing. That dream had so been worth the wait.

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Draco sat in the courtyard with a journal and a quill in his hand. He wasn't sure when he had started keeping a collection of his thoughts, but he knew he had been very young. Some of the writing was so messy it was almost hard to read. Now he held the quill over a blank page wondering what he wanted to write. His thoughts had been pouring in and out of his head lately and he hadn't been able to organize them in any way. Now he figured he had to start writing to hopefully get them out.

28th October, 1996.

*I don't know what to do or what I want to do. I feel like my life has been turned upside down in more ways than I could ever imagine. I've been back at school a month now and I feel like an outsider. I joke around with Potter and his friends but I just can't help but remember that they are HIS friends. They are still wary around me, even Potter himself, who tries to be convincing and get me to open up. But I wonder that if I open up and start telling him of all of the horrible things in my past I wonder if I will still be allowed safety.*

*I realize of course that he is not of the same mould as my parents or the Dark Lord – Voldemort, I mean. I have to remember to say it. I do agree with Potter on one thing, fear of the name increases fear of the thing itself. That's all Voldemort is, is a disgusting, disturbing thing that wants to ruin my life and has tried. But so far, I have managed to avoid him.*

*Then there's my parents ... I always wondered deep down if they ever really loved me or cared about me in any way. My mother I thought for sure did, after all she did give birth to me so isn't that naturally supposed to create some maternal bond? Apparently, I was wrong. I never wanted to admit it of course and I had hoped. But deep down, I remember all of the horrible things that she allowed Father to do to her and to others. She knew about everything. She wasn't the ignorant little wife that Father hoped she was. I almost feel*

*bad for her but I can't bring myself to knowing that she knows of everything that he did.*

*I've been having flashbacks of my past, ever since I ran into Delilah Knight and the image came of that scene I witnessed in the dungeons. The flashbacks have been more frequent and more frightening as things I had long hoped to bury keep returning. Like the night my father raped my mother. They think I don't know, but I hear things and I know things ... I'm not stupid contrary to what people believe. I heard her screaming, begging him for mercy and demanding of him why he couldn't just go off to one of his whores. Or one of the many mistresses that he keeps around London. This of course, only made Father more angry and he showed her with his fists. Naturally, he took into consideration that people would notice if she had bruises and made sure it was on parts of her body that no one else would see. Considerate of it him, naturally.*

*It makes me sick to think that I come from someone like him. Or worse, the idea that I once worshipped him. I still wonder if I dreamed that scene in the dungeon – I look to it as the day that I lost my trust and faith in Father. But then I remember other things I saw. Like when Aunt Bella escaped from Azkaban and showed up at the manor, Mother was hardly pleased. Father on the other hand was quite happy. It only took a day for him to get her into his bed. But according to my Uncle Rudolphus, it was normal and he didn't care. Aunt Bella apparently shares herself with most of the Death Eaters and with Voldemort himself. She is a favourite of his. It makes me sick.*

*Then there's Delilah. Delilah Knight. She hates me all because of something that my father did. Sins of the father – is that going to haunt me for the rest of my life? It makes me wonder. She's beautiful. Incredible actually, and isn't it just my luck to fall for someone who would rather see me dead than smile at me. She's just beautiful. All of this thick long dark black curly hair that I want to get my hands into. I'm surprised, actually, because Pansy has black hair and I've never liked it. But on Delilah ... it's incredible. I've had dreams of just my hands in her hair. And then there are her eyes ... dark deep grey that I just love and I'm curious to see what they would look like when they were laughing. Or even just looking at me in affection, rather than a sneer. But I suppose I'm dreaming. Father raped and killed her*

*mother ... of course he wasn't the only one there but as far as I know she doesn't know that.*

*But she hates me and my chance there is hopeless ...*

*But I don't have time to be wallowing in my misery. I don't even know why I wrote all that. But my mind is elsewhere I suppose ... like on the flashback that I've been having of the day Father came home and told me Voldemort had returned. He said that now things were going to change and now it would be time for the people to pay for the way they had treated our family. Whatever that meant but then he arrived at the house, demanding that Father offer him a whiskey and a place to sit. Mother fell to her knees in front of him, kissing his hands and he slapped her, knocking her back. Told her she was to be punished as Father did for believing that he had really disappeared. Then he saw me standing in the doorway.*

*He called me forth and I remember trying to act cocky and secure but I was afraid. Father caught my attitude though and backhanded me on the way, demanding that I show respect to my master. He's not my master. I said as much and Voldemort sneered at me. He called me a handsome young lad and a brave one ... and then he placed me under the Cruciatus Curse. Told me I needed to show respect to my elders. It was painful beyond measure ... an experience that I can gladly say I hope to not suffer through again. I remember kneeling in front of him and him running his hand over my left arm and grinning at me. Told me that one day when I was old enough I would be worthy enough to help him. I spit on him. I don't know what made me do it. I know how dangerous he is but I did it anyway. He flipped his wand and this spiked whip appeared from the tip. Father yanked me to my feet and vanished my clothes before turning my back to Voldemort. It was painful. I could feel my flesh burning from the force of the whip. I still have the scars.*

*Why I am reliving all of these things I'd rather forget? I cannot say. But I do know that I am unsure as to where my life is leading. I need to put more trust in Potter and Dumbledore but, I think that I am still worried that Father will force me back and kill me. If I do not join the dark army, I will be killed. My own father warned me of this.*

*I have nothing else to say now as I think my mind has lightened considerably and there is a beautiful girl walking my way. The dark beauty ... Delilah ...*

Draco put down his quill and closed his journal. He watched as she walked towards the lake, unaware that he was nearby. The weather was still warm enough that she unbuttoned the top buttons on her blouse and loosened her tie, slipping her shoes off and dipping her bare feet in the lake. She let out a sigh and leaned back in the grass, laughing when the giant squid jumped up in the middle of the lake and splashed back down. He grinned, he had never seen her laugh before and he had been right ... her eyes lit up, her dimples widened. He grinned when he saw a blonde girl hurry towards her.

"Del! What are you doing? The water must be freezing!" She exclaimed.

Delilah shook her head. "No, it's refreshing! I so need this! Come on, Mandy, put your feet in!"

The girl, Mandy shook her head. "I'm not crazy like you are! Besides, what would others think?"

Delilah rolled her eyes. "Like I care what others think."

Mandy giggled. "You think you would, considering the things that Pansy says about you."

"Yeah, well Pansy can say whatever she wants about me. I know that it's not true."

Mandy grinned. "I don't know, I still think that the best one was when she tried to convince people that you had given birth to a dinosaur."

Delilah laughed. "Exactly! Why would anyone believe that? It makes her look worse then it does me."

"You look worse," Pansy squealed as she stepped up next to them. "Then what me? Because everyone knows that that's true." The three girls on either side of Pansy grinned. Avena Penn and Mala Crafton

just giggled as if everything Pansy said was the honest true. Janice Langston, the other shadow of Pansy's game just sneered at her.

"Real witty," Delilah replied as she rolled her eyes.

Pansy's eyes darkened. "Listen, Knight, I saw MY Draco looking at you in the hall and I don't appreciate it. He should be looking at me like that and no one else. You better leave him alone if you know what's good for you!"

"He was looking at me, not the other way around."

She smirked. "Oh, but I know that you were looking back, who wouldn't? He has those long fingered wide palmed hands that just make you wonder and not to mention his blue eyes. Are you telling me that you actually don't find him attractive? What the hell is wrong with you, Knight? Unless of course, men aren't your style?"

Delilah rolled her eyes again. "Of course he's handsome, if you're into that golden prince look. But no I'm not interested in your boy toy, Pansy."

Draco stiffened at those words as he stayed where he was. He was no one's boy toy. The brunette next to Pansy who he knew as Janice growled.

"Pul-lease Delilah, we all know that you chase guys just to take them away from the ones who love them."

"Hey!" Mandy protested. "That is so untrue! That's clearly my job!"

Delilah laughed. "Nice one, Mandy."

"Heh, you think you're so great! But you're not! You make me sick!" Pansy replied.

"Well, then why are you here bothering me?" Delilah asked. "I was enjoying myself in peace."

"I can do anything that I want, Knight, I rule this school."

“Whatever you say. Go find your boy toy and leave me alone.”

“I will. He loves me and you’ll never have him!”

Draco rolled his eyes and hid behind the tree. Pansy was really starting to piss him off more then usual. He was thinking that it was because James had mentioned he might be able to get out of marrying her. He watched her and her three friends storm off and Mandy followed a few minutes later with Delilah. He sighed.

He was never going to get what he wanted.

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James stood in front of Dumbledore’s office, his breathing heavy. He couldn’t believe that he was actually here. But the talk that he had had with Remus and Sirius a few weeks ago had really affected him more then he thought. He wasn’t, of course, whoring around. He would never stoop that low and his friends knew it, which was why he wondered why they would even mention it. Where he had actually been was ... no; no one would ever understand but he had kept it a secret for so long. He had to tell someone, someone who would understand him. He knocked on the door and when he heard Dumbledore call out come in he stepped inside and closed the door.

Dumbledore smiled. “Good evening, James, and what do I owe this surprise visit?”

James took a deep breath. “I have a confession to make. Something that I’ve been keeping a secret for a really long time and ... Harry, Sirius, and Remus are starting to get suspicious and worried, more so then before.”

“And what would you like me to do?” He asked.

“I thought ... I hoped ... that you would understand. It was my decision and I ... I need to confess.”

Dumbledore nodded and gestured for James to take a seat. He

folded his hands in front of him, his blue eyes twinkling. "I'm always here to listen, James. What have you been hiding?"

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## **Chapter 62: Married Life**

**Author's Notes:** plz review!

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### **Chapter LXII – Married Life**

James felt better after his talk with Dumbledore. He felt like he had lifted a huge weight off of his chest and he wasn't even a little bit surprised to learn that Dumbledore had known the entire time. He never missed a trick that man. He stepped into the living room of Potter Manor with a calmer conscious and grinned in amusement to find Remus and Tonks curled up comfortably on the chesterfield.

"Well, just make yourselves at home." He said with a grin as he plopped himself down in his favourite armchair.

Remus grinned as he gently ran his fingers through his wife's hair. "We did. Where are you coming from?"

"Dumbledore's office," James replied. "I needed to talk to him about some stuff. What are you two doing here?" He looked down at Tonks' large belly and grinned. They were so wonderful together and he still couldn't believe that Remus was going to be a father.

Tonks smiled. "Nothing much really. We just thought that we'd come over to visit and Maddy mentioned that you were to be back soon so we decided to wait." She lifted her head a bit to snuggle closer to her husband before she rubbed a hand over her stomach. "And I admit, I was feeling a little restless. This little guy in here doesn't want to stay still."

James grinned. "Lily was like that with Harry, she said he was always

moving around in there and kicking up a storm. But it's almost over. Hard to believe you're due soon."

Tonks rolled her eyes. "Soon! I've already been like this for eight and half bloody months! You try having a baby!"

James winced. "I'll pass, oh wondrous one!"

Remus snorted. "Sucking up, Prongs? Only I'm allowed to do that."

Tonks laughed. "Yes, you are."

James grinned. "Have you two decided on a name yet? Last I heard you were still arguing."

Remus rolled his eyes. "Well, she's too picky."

"I am not! I just don't want one of those old names – I mean look at us! Nymphadora and Remus! Drat it; I want a good name for our son."

James grinned. "Well, got any in mind?"

Remus nodded. "Yeah, I think we finally decided on one, right Tonks?"

"Daniel ... it was my grandfather's name. A very special man and we both like it." Tonks replied.

"Actually," Remus began. "We were thinking about asking ... one of the reasons we're here actually was to ask your opinion ... Tonks and I were thinking about asking Harry to be the godfather."

James grinned. "No kidding?"

Tonks shook her head. "No, no kidding. What do you think? I mean, do you think he'd be okay with it?"

James nodded. "Hell yes. I think that he'd be incredibly touched by it. What made you choose Harry?"



Remus shrugged. "It was my idea actually. I thought about asking you first and then I thought of everything that's been going on with Harry and how I've always been an honorary uncle to him and all that jazz and I thought that I wanted him to have that same opportunity to my son."

James smiled. "I think that it's brilliant. He's going to love it. Have you thought of a middle name yet? Daniel Blank Lupin?"

Tonks grinned. "That was my idea too ... I was thinking ... Daniel James Lupin."

James glanced at her in surprise. He had come to love Tonks like a close sister and he knew that she was utterly perfect for his mate. But he had never expected such a feat from her. "Really?"

Remus nodded. "I was always closer to Sirius than I was to you in school, James ... I mean, we all had our own bond, but we were both closer to Sirius than each other, even if we were best friends. Much in the way that Harry is closer to Ron than Hermione. But when Sirius went to prison ... you became more like a brother to me than you already had been. I love Sirius and he will always be my best mate, but right now, he's getting second choice in the naming of my kid."

James laughed. "I'm honoured, Moony. Thank you."

Remus grinned. "No thank you."

Tonks sniffed and began to wipe tears from her eyes. "Don't mind me! I'm em-em-emotional!" She sobbed.

Remus laughed. "Or so the healer says. She bursts into tears at the most random times."

"Lily did too ... and bouts of temper." James replied with a grin. "The healers told me that it was hormones."

"Don't talk about me like I'm not here!" Tonks exclaimed.

Remus grinned and kissed her temple. "Sorry, honey."

James grinned. "Well, I've got a bit more paperwork to do before I head into work tomorrow. King has really been loading it up on me. But why don't you guys come over to dinner on Saturday? I'll owl Sirius and Lexy too."

Tonks smiled. "That sounds wonderful." She wobbled to her feet and took Remus' arm. "We'll be here."

"Good."

James saw them to the door, grinning at the car that Remus and Tonks had bought since Tonks couldn't apparate or use the floo while she was pregnant. They had purchased, finally only last week, a baby blue jeep – two guesses on who picked the colour – so that they could travel easily. He watched Remus back out of the driveway and head through the gate and he sighed.

*How would they react if they ever learned the truth?*

\*\*\*\*\*

Remus drove in silence all the way to their home and when he parked the car in the garage he helped Tonks out, much to her dismay. It still didn't please her that she wobbled to and fro on a regular basis. He unlocked the door to their two-story cottage that they had bought and they stepped inside. Once they were sitting inside their living room, a fire in the hearth, Remus slipped his arm around his wife and kissed her cheek.

"Well?"

She sighed. "He seems alright, but at the same time there's something there under the surface. Do you have any idea what's going on with him?"

Remus shook his head. "No idea. Sirius thinks that he might be visiting Lily's grave. It's a strong suspicion, but I don't know ... something's not right. He's always done this, Nymph, always ... I

mean ever since Lily ... he disappeared for a few hours here and there but I never thought anything of it. I thought maybe he had found an outlet for his grief. But ever since Harry had that dream where he spoke to his mother ... James has been gone more and he looks exhausted much of the time. He's not talking to any of us either. I just don't know anymore."

Tonks reached up to run her hand over the rough stubble on his face and then brought his mouth to hers in a sweet kiss. "He's your best friend so I understand why you would worry so much. I think giving him until Christmas is a good plan. That's almost two months for him to really think about what you and Sirius and Harry have said to him. He'll come around and if not, you'll have to force it out of him. And at Christmas he'll be surrounded by everyone who loves him, it's the best time to get him to confess."

Remus nodded. "I know and I don't want it to come to that. Sirius agreed that if we don't know by Christmas Eve, one of us is going to follow him. It seems harsh though, like we'll be invading on his privacy in some way."

"You are, but when you're so concerned ... it will be worth it."

He sighed. "I hope you're right." He slid his hand over her thigh and up to her huge belly. He rubbed slow circles there. "I've got other things to worry about anyway."

She smiled and placed her hand over his. "We're doing just fine here, Daddy, so no worries."

Remus grinned and slid his hand up a bit higher to stroke her breast. "Well, if I can't worry then I'm sure that there are other things I could be doing."

Tonks grinned. "Oh? And what did you have in mind?"

He turned so that she was pinned down to the couch before he leaned down to kiss her softly. Softly and slowly enough to feel her absolute surrender to his touch before he gently began to inch her sweater up. "Why don't I show you just what I had in mind, Mrs.

Lupin?”

Tonks grinned and began to unbutton his shirt. “Why don’t you?”

\*\*\*\*\*

Sirius lay in bed next to his wife watching her sleep. It was times like this when he was alone and quiet that he wondered how he had ever become so lucky. She was so beautiful. He reached out to run a hand over her creamy skin. He had never pictured himself lucky in any way before other than the fact that he had been lucky enough to escape his parents, but Lexy changed all that. He wasn’t sure exactly what he had expected marriage to be ... maybe the same as his parents where his mother controlled everything and they slept in separate rooms. But now he couldn’t imagine his life without the woman next to him.

He loved waking up in the morning to feel her tight body wrapped loosely around him and her head on his chest. He loved waking up first and arousing her out of sleep and into a breathtaking climax that left her skin glowing and a big sloppy grin on her face. He loved crawling into bed next to her at night and just staring at her as they talked about their day. He loved chasing her around the castle and luring her into making love at all hours in different areas. But most of all he loved the way she loved him.

It was nice to wake up in the morning to the feel of her running slow circles over his heart and hear her whispering how much she loved him. It was nice to hold her close and look deep into those misty green eyes and remember how he had first kissed her. It was nice to know that they were together and that she belonged to him and him to her. She was his everything.

He reached over and gently ran his fingers through her hair. He couldn’t believe that it was already the end of November. The school year was going by quickly and he had already been married to her for five months. Now Christmas was fast approaching and he remembered that it had only been last Christmas that she had gotten so fed up with him and silenced him with a kiss ... and then some really incredible sex. He loved her more than anything and lately he

had been wondering if she was pulling away from him.

Lexy had been acting oddly lately.

She was up early in the mornings, usually way before him and instead of snuggling close and trying to get him to make love with her, which was how they usually started the day, she was always up and about and ready for work. He had asked her about it but she had told him that it was nothing to worry about and that she was fine. He however, was not buying it. Something was bothering her and he wanted to know what it was.

His first thought had been the incredible attention he had been getting as he was labelled Hogwarts Sexiest Male Professor, but from the amused looks he usually got from his wife he was pretty positive that that wasn't it. He reached out to touch her hair and she rolled into him, making him smile. He kissed her cheek softly before he moved down to her neck. She moaned and her fingers slid up his chest and her eyes opened.

"Sirius?"

"Hey baby." He kissed her again, this time on the lips, deepening the kiss and making her groan. He pulled back and smiled at her. "I thought that I should wake you up."

She grinned. "Okay ... why?"

He shrugged. "I don't know ... felt like it."

She laughed and cuddled closer. "Sirius ... can we talk for a minute?"

"I thought that that's what we were doing?"

She smiled. "Hmm ... Tonks is going to be having her baby soon."

He nodded. "Yeah. I still can't believe old Moony is going to be a father. Crazy thought ... almost as crazy as me being one. I'd probably turn out like my parents – horrible and make my kids hate me!" He shuddered. "But Moony would make a great go out of it."

Lexy nodded. "Yeah. Well since we're up, I might as well go shower for work."

"I thought that you wanted to talk?" Sirius asked as he reached out to pull her back into his arms.

Lexy pushed him away. "Maybe later." She kissed his cheek and sauntered off to the bathroom naked and he sighed.

Something was definitely up with her.

\*\*\*\*\*

It was the beginning of the December and the school year had been flying by. Harry was counting down the days until Ginny would be coming back and he was anxious for the holidays. Quidditch had been going well and they had won the first match of the season against Hufflepuff. Ron and Hermione had been bickering more than usual and he could only grin at them, wondering who was going to win the bet on how long it would take them to snog.

The school year really was flying by. He was talking to Ginny as much as he could and he knew that she was progressing really well in her magic and that Molly had not been too thrilled to hear that her daughter would be staying longer. But Ginny really seemed to be enjoying herself. Harry mentioned as much as he could the comings and goings of what was happening at school but there were still two things that he hadn't shared with her and he realized instantly at that moment that he really wanted to and needed to. He used his elementals to bring a link to Ginny, grinning at how quickly he could connect with her mind now.

"Harry?" She asked, yawning.

He grinned. "*Hey baby, sorry to wake you up.*"

He felt her smile. "*It's okay. What's going on?*"

He shrugged. "*I really wanted to talk to you. You've been bugging me*

*lately that you know something's bothering me and ... well, I just realized now that I want to tell you. I need to tell you."*

He felt her become more alert. *"Well, then please do."*

He smiled. *"First of all ... I've had this issue with my da."*

*"Harry, are you fighting with him again?"*

Harry shook his head. *"No."* He quickly explained all about James' weird disappearances and everything that Sirius and Remus were doing about it. *"He's hiding something, Gin."*

She nodded. *"Yes he is. But I think that he'll come around when he's ready to. Just give him time, Harry."*

He sighed. *"I'm getting tired of giving him so much damn time! Why can't he just tell me?!"*

*"Well, you're a lot like him and he needs time to himself for a while. He's going somewhere and obviously going through something and right now you just need to think about that."*

*"Alright ... I knew you'd make me see that but I was hoping maybe there was a slim chance you'd have a way to make up some plan for me to learn his secret."*

She laughed. *"No, so what's this other thing that you need to tell me?"*

He blushed. *"Well ... er ... actually, ever since you've been gone, well since I returned to school, there's been a lot of girls who ... they seem to be quite interested and they won't take no for an answer."*

She laughed. *"Explain."*

*"Well, do you know Romilda Vane? She's a fourth year and she keeps trying to kiss me and once I ended up in a classroom with her alone and I don't know, she scares me ... and Hermione says that she's heard rumours of some girls trying to collect love potions and ..."*

*hell, they're attacking me!"*

*She laughed again. "Oh, you poor baby. Don't worry, when I come back I'll make sure that they know you're all mine from your hair to your toes. Got it?"*

*He grinned. "Just how are you going to do that?"*

*"Oh I have my ways."*

*"Hmm, I can't wait to see what those are. I unfortunately am going to be late for DADA if I don't hurry up and grab some breakfast first, but I'll talk to you later. I love you."*

*She smiled. "I love you too."*

She felt him disappear from her mind and she sighed. Oh, she was definitely going to prove who he belonged to when she returned.

Harry hurried into the Great Hall to eat breakfast before class. He only had about twenty minutes and he ignored Hermione's scowl at his lateness when he took a seat between her and Ron. He grinned when he recognized Remus and Tonks' owl Robyn flying his way. He smiled at the brown bird when she landed and untied the letter from her before he gave her some of the food from the table.

"Is that Remus and Tonks' owl?" Hermione asked.

Harry nodded. "Yeah, Da bought her for them for their wedding, remember?"

He unscrolled the letter and began to read as he munched on his breakfast:

**Dear Harry,**

**How are you? Good, good. So we're writing because duh, we miss you! But also because Remus and I have a serious thing to discuss with you. We would naturally much rather do it in person but since we probably won't see you until Christmas,**



letter format will have to do. Though I suppose we could contact you with the mirror ... bah! I already started the letter.

Alright, so as you know, I am hugely pregnant with a growing baby boy who of which we have decided to name Daniel James Lupin. However, we have been debating for some time who to make this child's godparents. Remus and I would be honoured if you would be Daniel's godfather. If you don't want to we understand but we would be so honoured.

Thanks!

Love always,

**Uncle Remus and Aunt Tonks**

Harry grinned when he finished reading the letter. He couldn't believe what they were asking him. He had never expected such an honour.

"What do they have to say?" Hermione asked.

Harry grinned at her. "They want me to be their first child's godfather."

"Blimey," Ron muttered from his other side. "Really?"

"That's quite an honour, Harry."

He grinned. "Yeah. I think that I'd really like that. I'm going to tell them yes. I'll meet you guys in class!"

He hurried out of the Great Hall and found a private classroom where he pulled out his mirror. "Uncle Remus?"

A few seconds later, Tonks' face appeared. "Wotcher Harry. Remus is in the shower."

Harry grinned at her. "I just got your letter."

Tonks smiled. "Oh? And what do you think?"

"I'd love to. It would be so brilliant to be Daniel's godfather. I can't believe that you're asking me!" He exclaimed.

She laughed. "Well, I think it's a good idea and James wasn't surprised when we told him. So you really accept?"

He nodded. "Yes. Is he going to have a godmother too?"

Tonks smiled. "Yes, he is. I was thinking about asking Lexy. She's really become one of my best friends so it seemed right."

"That's brilliant! Thanks, Aunt Tonks."

She laughed. "I love hearing you say that! I'll have Remus contact you when he gets out of the shower. See you later, handsome."

He grinned. "Bye." He placed the mirror back into his pocket and grinned. Everything was just beginning to get so interesting. He glanced at his watch and swore silently, now he only had five minutes to eat. It looked like he was going to be late for class, again.

\*\*\*\*\*

Something was bothering Lexy but she didn't know how to broach the subject. Her opportunity came when Tonks came to Hogwarts one afternoon that she didn't have class. She smiled at her friend when she stepped into the suite.

"Tonks! What are you doing here?" Lexy asked as she hurried over to hug her.

Tonks grinned. "I needed to get out for a bit, Remus is smothering me and I needed to talk to you. How are you?"

Lexy shrugged. "I'm alright."

"No, you're not, something's up. Come on, if you can't tell your best then who can you talk to?"

Lexy sighed. "I'm pregnant."

Tonks grinned. "Oh, that's wonderful!" But when she saw her friend's face she frowned. "Isn't it?"

Lexy groaned and buried her face in her hands. "I want this baby so much!"

Tonks sat down on the chesterfield next to her, pulling her friend into her arms. "Of course, you do, honey, what's going on?"

"How can I tell him, Tonks?" She asked. "He's going to hate me!"

Tonks glanced at Lexy in surprise. "Why would you think that?"

"Haven't you ever heard him? Sure he likes kids and all but he doesn't want any. He's mentioned so many times that he wouldn't be a good father and how his parents were horrible and ... and now I'm pregnant and ... I don't know how he's going to react."

### ***Meanwhile ...***

Sirius had a free period since he had let his class out early and he was hoping to find Lexy so that he could make love to her until she talked to him. He was really beginning to worry about her now. He was just about to open the door to his suite when he heard his wife's voice.

"I don't know how he's going to react, Tonks! What if he leaves me?"

"Lexy! You're being ridiculous! Sirius loves you."

She sniffed. "He's going to hate me. It's my fault, I slipped up! He's going to leave and then what am I going to do?"

Sirius took a step back from the door in shock. Lexy thought that he was leaving her? Why on earth would she think that? He took another step away and then he grinned. He would just have to prove to her how much he loved and what better time to do that than the Christmas season.

As Sirius headed to his office, Lexy continued to sob on Tonks' shoulder.

"Everything is going to be alright, Lexy ... Sirius is not going to leave you."

"How do you know that? He doesn't want children and I want them so much! I had hoped that I would be able to change his mind but every time I mention it he becomes pale and changes the subject!" Lexy exclaimed.

Tonks sighed. "I just know it, Lex ... Sirius will do the right thing."

"The right thing? I don't want him to do the bloody right thing! If he wants this baby that's one thing ... but if not ... then I'll have to leave him. I don't have a choice."

Tonks sighed as she held her friend tight; she just hoped that Sirius smartened up. And she hoped that she wasn't wrong about her favourite cousin.

\*\*\*\*\*

As the months went by, Ginny's magic had steadily been becoming stronger. She had mastered wandless magic and now knew how to reach out to others when they needed a healing touch or comfort. She could use her magic to offer comfort to people when they were feeling angry or sad or frightened. She had also figured out that she had the power of healing. It was a hard task and one that Emma herself also possessed and it could also be dangerous. For the ability of healing to work she had to call the injury into herself. It was dangerous and it used a lot of her power but she could do it. Emma told her that she could probably even bring people back from the dead as long as they had died only minutes before. The power was that overwhelming.

She had found her special ability as well and much to her sadness it was not the power of flame throwing such as Emma had, though fire was her main element. She could create heat around her and use fire as a weapon but when it appeared like burning balls of flames in her

hand it would mix with her power and allow for her wandless magic skills to increase and her power to be five times as strong. She had also developed her psychic powers to another degree.

She had managed to master both Occulmency and Legilimency in a matter of weeks. Emma had explained to her that this was because of her power and because of her skill at telepathy. With this new protection around her mind she knew that Harry would feel better and like she was more protected, and she herself felt much safer. Her psychic powers had also taken another turn; she could feel the pain of those she loved. Even an ocean away, she knew when her parents or her brother or Harry and even the Marauders were angry or sad or hurt in any way. She hadn't understood it at first as a vision would come, quickly, like a flash of the person and then it would be gone and she would feel nothing but their emotions spinning out of control within her own body.

She had told Emma about it, as the first one had been of James and he had been sitting in Dumbledore's office crying. She hadn't understood it as she had only seen him and then she had felt incredible pain and sadness and a sense of loss and hopelessness. She had thought about mentioning it to Harry that day when he had told her of his worries for his da but since she didn't understand the emotions or why James might have been crying, she had kept quiet. Emma had explained that this was part of being an empath and now she would experience feelings such as those on a regular basis because she had tapped into her power source so to speak. Emma did promise her that she could work on keeping a better control on her own emotions so everyone else's emotions didn't attack her so much. Ginny wasn't sure what to think about it but she hoped that one day it would come in useful.

Levitation was another ability that she had finally come to terms with. She could make herself float in the air when she was incredibly happy and if she was holding onto someone, that person would come with her. She didn't know the reason for this power, but it was fun.

Astral projection she still had not managed and Emma told her not to worry about it. Emma couldn't do it either and she explained that very few people were able to. But then the best part was when in the

month of November, Emma had taken her to meet other people to test her skills.

She had gone to Tibet and met with a beautiful woman named Li Chung who tested her skills in the healing ability and had been impressed. They had then spent the rest of the day shopping in Hong Kong and taking pictures of places all over China. They had spent two days there before heading to Africa and meeting with an old wizard named Duna. He was seen as almost a leader of one of the villages and part of an old secret tribe in the wizarding world. His powers regarding reading emotions were phenomenal and he showed Ginny how to use hers and to put the troublesome emotions behind her when they came. By this he meant, that when she knew and understood the emotions she was receiving as well as who they were from then she could push them to the back of her mind enough that she could feel them but still get on with other tasks; which was important because sometimes the emotions were so strong that she couldn't even move. It was interesting. They spent four days with him and he helped build shields around her magic that not only increased it but made it stronger, more powerful, and more intense. She felt like a new person when they left Africa and headed to Hawaii.

She was surprised to end up in Hawaii but Emma wanted her to meet a witch there named Leila Henderson who was an incredible telepathic. She helped Ginny refine her skills a bit and to make them more clear. She found that it made it easier for her to do other things while carrying on a conversation in her mind. Like she could be learning a new spell, or reading a book or anything like that while carrying on a conversation in her mind. It was interesting and she liked it better than just lying around and talking.

When they returned to New York it was the day before Christmas Eve and Ginny was ready to go home. She had learned more about herself and her powers than she had ever imagined and she had grown into a young woman, according to Emma, a beautiful young woman, though Ginny still saw herself as mildly pretty. Emma had taken her to get her hair trimmed and the highlights fixed before she went home so that her hair continued to look fantastic. She had grown a few inches and now stood at 5'5, which she thought was a respectable height even if she was still kind of short. Her breasts had

become fuller and the last of her baby fat had disappeared making her waist flat and taut. She had developed smooth contours on her curvaceous hips and she looked like a beautiful young woman. Her creamy skin glowed making her look happy and carefree and showing the underlying of her intense power. To simplify it; she had grown up.

Now Ginny stood in the room that she had called her own for the last five months, grinning at the idea of surprising her family on Christmas as she packed the rest of her things. But it was at that moment that she felt an overwhelming sense of pain, grief, and hopelessness take her and she fell to her knees from the strength of it. She focused her energy on it, trying to pull the feelings apart enough to see who they belonged and not for the first time she found through the pain in her head and her heart that they were coming from James.

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## Chapter 63: The Secret

**Author's Notes:** the chapter u've all been waiting for - thanks to kate for helping me perfect this idea and plan - plz review!!

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## Chapter LXIII – The Secret

Ginny fell to her knees from the shock of the emotions that were running through her. She gasped as the grief became stronger and she saw a flash of James sitting in a chair rocking back and forth as he cried before the image disappeared and she was left on her knees on the bedroom floor. She climbed to her feet and stumbled into the living room. The power of the pain still running through her.

“Hey, Ginevra, are you ready to go?” Emma asked as she sorted through the two bags that she had packed along for the trip.

“Emma, I just had ... something’s wrong.”

Emma looked up at Ginny in concern. "What did you see?"

Ginny reached out and clasped hands with her, sending the feel of the emotions as well as the vision forward. "I need ... he needs help."

Emma nodded, trying not to stumble back at the impact of the power that ripped through her. "Yes he does. This is more intense than the ones you've been feeling since you arrived, isn't it?"

She nodded. "It shocked me ... I collapsed to my knees."

"Can you figure out where this man is from the connection?" Emma asked. "Because if you can, we can portkey to him immediately and possibly help him out."

Ginny nodded and she wondered what was going on with James. She never remembered seeing him like that, but he had been on an emotional rollercoaster since at least September. She knew that if she could help him, nothing was going to stop her. "Yeah, I think that I know where he is."

Emma grinned. "Good. Alright, use the connection, concentrate on it hard and imagine a portkey out of this book that takes you directly to James Potter."

Ginny gulped and did what Emma asked, clasping her hand tightly in Emma's hand and then felt the familiar tug at her navel as she began to fly towards the source of the pain.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry yawned as he stepped into the living room of Potter Manor that morning. He couldn't believe that it was already Christmas break. He, Hermione, Ron, and Draco had arrived at the manor the day before as the Weasleys all planned to spend Christmas there. To everyone's surprise, the Weasleys had included more than planned. Bill had come in with his fiancée, surprising Molly into a faint. Something Harry had never imagined possible. Bill had proposed to Fleur Delacour only last week and had brought her along to spend Christmas with his family. Charlie had also come home for Christmas,



leaving Percy as the only one missing besides Ginny. Other than James.

Harry was not pleased to know that his father had disappeared again that morning. He had said as much to Sirius and Remus when they had arrived for the holidays and they had agreed. They were now working on a locator spell on James by using the mirror. Harry thought that it was a good idea as if they figured out where the mirror was they could find James and then Harry planned to go wherever he was. He was tired of hearing his father's excuses and with Christmas Eve the following day, he wasn't giving him any more chances. He was tired of it and he had actually snapped at Ron and Hermione twice today when they had started to bicker. Draco had simply smirked and mentioned to Harry that he was going to lose the bet if he wasn't careful. But Draco had only been teasing, as he knew that there was something going on with James also and he knew Harry was concerned.

He was also anxious for Ginny to return, she was supposed to be returning in one week, on New Years' Eve. He missed her so much and he desperately wanted to see her and to hold her. He wasn't sure at the moment what he wanted more ... Ginny in his arms or to figure out just what the hell his father was hiding from him.

He grinned when Sirius came in the room. "Well?"

Sirius grinned. "We got it. We can't tell the exact spot but we have an idea. Moony's working on a spell now that will send you directly to him without using a portkey since you can't Apparate yet. It might take him a while but he needs you there."

Harry nodded. "Alright, I'm coming. I just hope it works."

Sirius nodded. "Me too."

Harry followed Sirius out of the room, wondering just how James was going to react when he suddenly arrived in front of him.

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James reached out to touch, tears in his eyes. He had hoped and he had used everything that he had in his magical abilities ... but he couldn't do it. He didn't have the power. Tears poured from his eyes as he realized that he was actually beginning to give up hope. There was a popping noise and he turned, gasping in surprise when a beautiful dark-haired woman and Ginny appeared in front of him. His eyes darted back and forth for an excuse but the shock appeared on Ginny's face before he could come up with one.

"James," she gasped, covering her mouth with her hand. "How could you?" Her eyes fell towards the beautiful redhead lying in the hospital bed. Her skin pale and her eyes closed. "Oh, James, you didn't?"

The look on her face did it for him. He reached out, taking his wife's hand in his and kissing her fingers before the dam broke and he began to sob. Ginny stood in front of him and wrapped her arms around him.

"I – I ... I couldn't just let her go, Ginny ... the healers told me that she had next to no chance of ever waking again ... but it was the chance that did me."

"Why did you let everyone believe that she was dead?" Ginny asked as her eyes drifted to the lifeless body in the bed.

Tears poured from his hazel eyes. "They don't understand. Moony and Dumbledore ... they told me to let her go, that she wasn't going to wake up and that I was only going to hurt myself by hoping ... but I couldn't do it."

Ginny kept her arms around him as he cried. "Harry doesn't know?"

James shook his head. "I ... I never could find the words to tell him. He's going to hate me if he ever finds out."

Ginny nodded. "I think that there's a pretty good chance at that." She kissed his cheek and wiped away his tears with her fingers. "I felt you from America ... ever since September. I've just felt this overwhelming sense of grief and pain and hopelessness that was connected to Harry but not coming from him. Emma has helped me

understand it. But tonight ... James it was so strong it sent me to my knees. I saw you, sitting here in pain and I think that I can help."

Emma smiled sympathetically before she stepped forward and placed her hand on Lily's forehead. "It was intense the emotions that you were sending out. I felt them vibrating off of Ginevra. You're an extremely powerful wizard, Mr. Potter."

James' eyes drifted off towards his wife. "Not powerful enough. I have some healing abilities ... but I haven't ... I mean I've tried ... but it hasn't worked."

Emma smiled. "Maybe because you didn't have the right abilities. Together, Ginevra and I do."

James' eyes darted towards Emma and his voice was dead cold when he spoke. "Don't play games with me."

Ginny shook her head. "She's not. If she says that we can then we can. But we have to know, what's wrong with her, James?"

James swallowed. "Her memory ... Voldemort had tortured her so much that her memory was gone. It came back in snatches sometimes, but it would always go away. She had been paralyzed but I ... I fixed that. It's her mind and it got so bad ... she slipped into a coma. She's been that way ever since. I ... I put her in this special room in St. Mungo's with a paid staff to keep it quiet that she's here. I needed to bring Harry home with me to raise ... I couldn't do that with her the way she is. And with the way the Dursleys treated him ... I needed him at home with me. So I told everyone that she died and I had her placed here to be supervised by healers, hoping that she would come back to me. I used to visit her and talk to her usually about twice a week. It was all I could handle and I didn't want to be away from Harry. I always read Harry's letters to her. But then Harry had that dream ... her message to me ... she was working on it. My hope soared. She's trying to come back to me, I know she is!"

Ginny nodded. "I'm sure she is. And because of that message you've been spending way too much time here. Let Emma and I see what we can do, alright?"

He gulped and reached out to take Lily's hand. He kissed her fingers. "I'm here, sweetheart, I love you, my Lily-Rose."

Emma nodded to Ginny. "Stand back, Mr. Potter."

James dropped Lily's hand and stood back from the bed. "If you hurt her ..."

"We won't." Ginny replied.

James nodded and chewed his bottom lip nervously as Ginny and Emma both approached the bed. "I trust you, Ginny."

She smiled. "Just stay over there."

James nodded. "Alright."

"I'm not sure what to do," Ginny murmured softly.

Emma smiled. "Yes you do. Take her hand in yours and then hold onto my hand."

Ginny did what she asked and watched as Emma took her other hand before they combined their energy. Ginny felt the power zip through her in waves. She gasped at the shock of it before the pain hit her. She saw the damage pass before her eyes.

*Voldemort laughed; a long cold almost manic sound that echoed in Ginny's head. "Move aside, you silly girl!"*

*"NO!"*

*Voldemort's wand changed directions so fast that it was hard to see what happened. Lily blocked the spell and a duel began. "Crucio!" Lily fell to the floor, screaming in pain as Voldemort held his wand there and made her suffer. Her arms and legs bent backwards, falling over her head as her limbs cracked. Her arm ripped back right out of its socket and Ginny could feel the pain that was exploding in Lily's head. She felt her skin and her bones bending and breaking in ways that it*

*shouldn't and she could hear Lily's screams in her mind as she gasped in her own pain. Then Voldemort took the curse off and muttered "Avada Kedavra". Ginny watched as Lily dived in front of her son's crib, dodging the light and falling, her head crashing against the crib with a sickening slap as she hit the ground and blood trickled out from the top.*

The pain magnified as the memories of her life began to jumble around inside of her brain and Ginny witnessed the fear Lily had when she didn't remember anything; the happiness when she woke and found James there only to lose him again to her loss of memory. Then Ginny's eyes found Emma's who nodded at her and sent a wave of red energy her way and Ginny vanished from her mind. Her body still stood in the hospital room, holding the hand of Lily Potter, but her mind had sent an astral projection outwards, something that she had never before accomplished.

Ginny walked towards the dark and found herself in a clearing. Lily was sitting under a tree and she beckoned her forward. "Mrs. Potter?" She asked nervously as she walked towards her.

Lily smiled warmly up at her. "Oh, please call me Lily, and you must be Ginevra. I've heard so much about you."

Ginny smiled. "And I you. What is this place?"

Lily shrugged. "I'm not sure. But I can't seem to get out of it. I can hear James calling for me, you know, but I can't find him. I've been working on it for a very long time."

Ginny nodded. "A really long time."

"Fifteen years apparently, or so James tells me. I remember being taken care of by him and Remus but of course, my mind was jumbled a bit. What are you doing here?"

"I ... I came to take you home, back to James and back to Harry."

Lily's head darted up and her green eyes, so like her son's, filled with tears. "Can you really?"

Ginny nodded. "I can. All you have to do is take my hand." She extended her hand out and watched as Lily stood up and placed her hand in his.

The power shot through Ginny instantly and James gasped as a huge wall of red fire power rushed up around Ginny, Emma, and Lily. He heard Ginny cry out and watched in horror as cuts formed on her arms and her body twisted as if she was experiencing the pain that Lily had before. He stepped forward, not wanting her to hurt herself but a wave of blue power licked out and sent him flying backwards. He jumped to his feet and rushed forward in time to catch Ginny as she collapsed.

"Ginny?" He asked, running his hand over her cheek. "Come on, honey; if anything ever happened to you Harry would kill me!" He saw her smile and he grinned as her eyes opened. "There you are."

"Did it work?"

Emma gasped from across the room as the power disappeared from around her. "I think so."

James carried Ginny over to a chair and then he turned to the bed. Lily was still lying there. He walked towards her and took a seat on the side of the bed, taking her hand in his and kissing her fingers. "Lily?"

Lily's eyes fluttered open and he saw the love pouring out of them. "Jamie." She reached up to caress his cheek and he broke into sobs. "My Jamie."

"Lily ... Merlin, Lily," he murmured as he held her hand against his cheek.

"James," she whispered. "I was trying so hard ... but I couldn't find my way out."

He nodded. "It doesn't matter ... you're here now. I love you." He kissed the hand that she held against his cheek. "I love you so much."

She smiled and tried to sit up. He helped her and when she moved closer to him, he cradled her like a child in his lap. "How do you feel?"

"Awake and ... energized? Does that make sense?"

Ginny nodded as she sat up. Emma had just used her power to take the intense pain Ginny had suffered by healing Lily away. "Yes ... because I poured my power into you."

Lily looked concerned. "Are you hurt?"

Emma shook her head. "She'll be fine. She's the one that connected with you because she had the strongest connection. Ginevra took all of the pain and the injuries into herself and sent her energy to you, which is why she's a little shaky."

"I'm fine though, Lily, I'm just so happy that I did it. I brought you out." Ginny replied. "Harry's going to be so happy."

James' smile faded. "Yeah ... but I kept it a secret from him, from everyone."

Lily snuggled back against James. "I understand why, James. I wouldn't have wanted Harry to see me like this. That's not the way that he should remember his mum."

James nodded. "But the kid's got your temper. He's going to kill me."

Lily laughed and the sound made James' heart soar. "Well, we'll deal with him together."

Emma smiled. "I'm going to take Ginevra back to New York to collect her things and give her some potions to get her energy back. But we're going to ... Potter Manor, I believe."

James nodded. "Yeah ... everyone's there. It's going to be a great Christmas. You decided to come home earlier, Ginny?"

She grinned. "Yeah, I missed everyone so much."

James smiled. "Well, you know where everything is, make yourself at home and don't say ... never mind. Thank you. I can never repay you for this."

Ginny smiled warmly before she walked over and kissed James on the cheek. "My lips are sealed. But you better tell Harry everything. And you don't need to repay me, you gave me Harry."

He nodded. "Thank you. I promise I'll tell him."

"Good. See you guys later."

She held Emma's hand as they used the portkey to help them go back to her apartment. The portkey killed the energy that Ginny had left and she collapsed when they arrived.

"Oh no, you don't," Emma said as she levitated Ginny onto the couch. "I know you're weak but there's no passing out on me."

She disappeared for a moment as Ginny lied there, magic still sparking from her fingertips. She drank the potions that were suddenly forced down her throat and she felt her energy come back to her.

"How do you feel?" Emma asked.

"Better."

Emma smiled. "Good. We'll give it about ten minutes and then we should be good to go. You just need to rest for a moment. Now tell me, how intense was that?"

Ginny grinned. "It was incredible. I can't believe that I managed to bring her out of that. She was in a coma and her memory ... it was amazing. And I saw what happened to her. Emma, it was horrifying and disgusting and incredibly painful. She literally threw herself in front of her son's crib to save his life. She missed the killing curse by mere inches and banged her head on the crib. But the Cruciatus ... I think that it did the most damage."



Emma nodded. "I know ... I could see everything that you were seeing because we were connected but when you managed the astral projection ... I was helpless. I had no idea where you had gone or what you were doing. But then I just felt that you were alright and then you came back and you brought someone else with you. I felt her come back, wake up, adjust to no longer being lost. It was incredible."

Ginny smiled. "We actually did it."

Emma shook her head. "No, Ginevra, you did it. I was only there for support. It was you that took her pain and you that gave her energy and you that showed her how to come back. That's your power that you have inside of you and you figured out how to do it."

Ginny grinned and she could still feel the overwhelming power rushing through her. Yeah, she had done it. "Wow."

Emma laughed. "Wow exactly. Do you feel up to one more international portkey?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, I want to go to the manor."

Emma nodded and grabbed the portkey that had actually been assigned to them for their return trip home. She summoned all of Ginny's bags, which was a lot more since she had bought so many clothes and souvenirs and in a flash, the two of them were gone.

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"There! I think I got it," Remus muttered as he finished the last bit of the spell. "Are you ready, Harry?"

Harry nodded. "More ready than I'll ever be! I've got to see what Da's been hiding."

Sirius nodded. "You're not the only one. Alright, Moony, send him out."

Remus pointed his wand at Harry and muttered the appropriate incantation. Harry felt a weightless sensation rush over him and then he felt like he was flying as he flew off into space and landed on his feet in a hospital room without a sound.

It took him a second to get organized as he felt a little disoriented and when he saw the sight in front of him he gasped.

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Ginny and Emma landed in the entranceway of Potter Manor with their belongings. Before Ginny could even get the feeling that she had crossed an ocean out of her head she was swept up into strong arms that smelt like a campfire and cinnamon sticks and kissed on the cheek.

“Charlie!” She exclaimed. “Put me down!”

He laughed and spun her around in a circle. “In a minute, Shortstop, let me look at you.” He stood her back on the ground and grinned. “Wow, you really grew up and not so short any more.”

A loud whistle came from behind her and she turned to see Bill. “Bill!”

He grinned. “Firefly, Harry is going to faint when he sees you.”

Ginny blushed. “Do you like it?”

Bill smiled. “I love it. You look beautiful. I like the hair by the way.” He took a step towards her and pulled her close for a hug. “Did you learn a lot?”

She nodded. “The world.”

He grinned. “Good.” He pulled back and smiled at Emma. “Long time no see.”

Emma smiled. “Yes, it has been.”

“What’s all the commotion in here?” Molly asked as she stepped into

the entranceway. Then her eyes fell on her daughter. "GINNY!"

Ginny rushed forwards to throw herself into her mum's arms. "Mum!"

Molly held her close. "Look at your hair! Oh dear, it looks lovely. You look lovely." She sniffed back tears. "Oh, Ginny, you've grown so much!"

Ginny nodded. "I know!"

After Ginny had been passed around to her father, Fred, George, Ron, Hermione, Sirius, Lexy, Tonks, Remus and surprisingly received a small smile from Draco; she asked her mum if she could go up to bed. "I'm a little tired. Where's Harry at?"

Sirius grinned then. "Actually ... we decided to figure out James' secret and we sent him to him. It was a simple locator spell. He might not be home for a while."

"He really won't be. Emma and I just came from ... visiting James. Harry's going to be a while." Ginny replied.

"What do you mean?" Remus asked suddenly. "Do you know what's going on with James?"

Ginny shook her head. "I didn't until about two hours ago. It's not my place to tell. Good night everyone." She followed Maddy up the stairs to her room, wondering how Harry was going to react when he walked into the hospital room and wondering what was going through everyone's minds downstairs. She closed her eyes as she stepped into her room and prepared herself for the shockwaves that would attack her system from Harry.

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Harry's reaction was pretty typical. He gasped and then his eyes hardened. There was his father, sitting on the hospital bed, cradling his mum in his arms. Lily's eyes were laughing; her hand on his cheek and James was staring at her as if he couldn't believe that she was there.

“M-M-Mum,” Harry whispered.

James paled instantly as he looked across the room at his son.  
“Harry.”

“Da ... you ... no, you wouldn’t have ... you ... you never told me.”  
Harry whispered.

James gulped. “Harry I ...”

“Harry, come here,” Lily said softly.

Harry walked over to his parents and he looked at his mum. She looked pale but alive and well. His eyes flashed dangerously as he looked at his father and then back to his mother. “Mum?”

Lily slipped off of her husband’s lap and touched Harry’s cheek as James stood up. “I’m here, honey.”

Harry placed his hand over hers and then he took a step back and glared at his father. “How could you not tell me that she was ...  
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU?”

James gulped. “Harry ... I can explain.”

“CAN YOU?” Harry demanded angrily and before he could stop himself, his fist was in the air and he ploughed it headlong into his father’s face.

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## Chapter 64: Sirius and Lily

**Author's Notes:** plz review!!

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## **Chapter LXIV – Sirius and Lily**

James stumbled back as blood gushed from his nose. “Alright, that one was free.”

“HARRY JAMES POTTER!” Lily exclaimed from the bed. “HOW DARE YOU PUNCH YOUR FATHER?”

“No Lils, I deserved that. But the next one, I’m going to hit back.” James replied as he looked at his son and then quickly healed his nose as much as he could though he knew he was going to have a good shiner the next day.

Harry shook his head. “Good, hit me back.” He moved towards James’ again but this time a hand grabbed his arm to hold him back and he turned to look into eyes so very much like his own.

“Harry ... stop this, look at me! What do I look like to you?” Lily asked as she gently pulled her son closer to her.

“I don’t know.”

“She looks pale and definitely not healthy,” James supplied.

“Don’t bloody talk to me!” Harry demanded, his eyes flashing and James simply took a step back.

Lily sighed. “I was in a coma, Harry.”

“So?”

“I was in a coma and I was expected never to wake up.”

“So that gives Da the right to never tell me about it!” He whirled around to face his father. “Does anyone else know? Do Uncle Remus and Uncle Sirius know? Have you all just been laughing behind my back?”

James shook his head. “No Harry ... no one knew. I only just ... I only just recently confessed to Dumbledore who told me that he had

known all along.”

“I’m glad James never told you,” Lily replied.

Harry’s eyes snapped back to hers. “What?”

Lily nodded. “You heard me, sweetheart. I had no memory of who I was or where I came from. I was completely gone and then when I slipped into that coma ... that’s not the way that you should ever remember your mother. I’m glad that James never told you. I wouldn’t have wanted you to see me like that.”

“Lily,” James whispered. “Honey, you looked beautiful, you never stopped.”

Lily smiled. “Liar. I can only imagine what I must look like now. Harry, please ... don’t hate your father over this.”

“I don’t know if I can do that,” Harry replied calmly.

Lily still held his hand in hers as she pulled him down onto the bed and into her arms. “Merlin, sweetheart ... I need you to do it, for me.”

“When did you ... I mean ... how long have you been ...?”

“Just a little while ago,” James answered as Harry’s eyes met his. “Ginny and Emma ... they arrived here and they ... they cured her.”

“Ginny?” Harry asked, his heart swelling at the idea that she was back.

James nodded. “Ginny said that she could feel my pain from America and they arrived here ... she had the same reaction as you when she saw Lily lying in the bed. But then she and Emma ... they did ... it was incredible ... and then Lily woke up and she remembered everything.”

Harry let his mother cuddle him closer, his face buried in her neck and shoulder. “Ginny did this ...”

Lily smiled as she kissed his cheek. "She did, precious ... she found me and helped me come home. I was so lost." She kissed his forehead and then his cheeks again before she pulled him back into her arms.

"Mum?" Harry whispered as the realization hit him that this was his mother holding him in her arms. This was his mother, the woman that he had wanted more than anything in his entire life to be there was here. He held her closer and kissed her cheek, causing tears to run down her cheeks.

"Yes, honey, I'm here. I want to go home."

James sat down on the bed next to them. "You're coming home; we just have to get the healer to take a look at you first."

Lily reached over to cup her husband's cheek. "But Jamie, I feel just fine."

"No. I'm not risking anything. I'm not risking you, not ever again. I need you."

Harry glanced over at his father. "Why did you never tell me, Da?"

James sighed. "I didn't know how. You were so young and I didn't want you to see her like this until you were older but then as the years passed it became harder and harder to get the words out. I'm sorry, even though I know you don't want to hear those words. But right now, let's just get past this anger and be thankful that your mother is back with us. Alright?"

Harry nodded. "I can do that. Ginny really cured you, Mum?"

Lily nodded. "She did. She was little worn out afterwards and I believe Emma said that they were returning to Potter Manor this evening."

There was a knock on the door and James stood up. "That's the healer."

Harry watched as his father opened the door.

"Time's up, Mr. Potter. You know that visiting hours only go so long."  
The healer replied with a smile.

James grinned. "She's awake."

"What?" The healer asked.

James stepped aside to leave the bed clear for the man to see.  
"She's awake."

The healer stepped into the room and shooed Harry off the bed before he began to check her over with his wand. Then he stood back and smiled. "It's a miracle. I'd like to keep her overnight for observation but then I think Lily can go home tomorrow. She'll be home for Christmas Eve."

Tears rolled down Lily's cheeks. "I want to go home now. James, I don't want to stay here."

James took her into his arms, cradling her into his lap. "I know, darling. But Healer Dolan thinks that it's good for you."

Healer Dolan nodded. "We just want to make sure that everything stays alright. It's only one night, Lady Potter."

Lily shook her head. "James, I want to go home with you and Harry. Please, don't make me stay here!"

Her hands fisted in his shirt and he nodded. "I'm taking her home with me now."

"Mr. Potter! I don't recommend that!"

James shrugged. "Just tell me what to do; I'll take care of her."

Healer Dolan sighed. "If you take her home, then I must insist that you bring her back in the morning for a check up. Do I make myself clear?"



James nodded. "We'll be here."

Healer Dolan nodded and left the room.

Harry turned to his parents then. "How are you going to explain to everyone that Mum is alive?"

"Harry, why don't you go back to the manor and tell everyone. I'm going to get Lily showered and dressed and talk to the healer about any last minute instructions. We should be there in about an hour. I'll explain everything when we return." James replied.

Harry nodded. "Alright, but your still going to have a lot of explaining to do." He leaned down and kissed his Mum's cheek. "I love you, Mum."

Lily nodded, tears in her eyes. "I love you too. I'll see you in a little while, darling."

Harry nodded and then turned to head down to the ground floor of St. Mungo's where he quickly floored back to the manor. When he arrived in the entrance hall, the house was very quiet. He headed into the common room and sighed when he saw the large group of people. Draco, Hermione, and Ron were sitting on the floor while the furniture was covered with Bill, his arm around Fleur, Charlie, who was sitting next to a beautiful dark haired woman, Fred, George, Molly, Arthur, Remus with Tonks in his lap, and Sirius, with his arm around Lexy.

"Harry!" Sirius exclaimed when he saw him come in. "What happened?"

Harry gulped as he took a seat. He still wasn't sure if he believed any of it. "It was one hell of a secret."

"Harry! Watch your language!" Molly replied.

Harry grinned. "Sorry, Molly ... it ... it wasn't what I expected at all."

"It's alright, Harry ... I know that you're in shock but you need to tell everyone." Emma replied. When he looked up at her she smiled. "I'm

Emma, Ginevra and I were there and we know ...”

Harry nodded. “Thank you for what you did.”

Emma smiled. “It was all Ginevra. I was only tagging along for the ride.”

Harry nodded and he closed his eyes. He looked up when he felt a comforting hand on his shoulder and grinned at Sirius. “It was Mum.”

Sirius eyed him quizzically. “What?”

“Mum.” Harry said again.

“Lily?” Remus asked, standing up. “Was he going to Lily’s grave like we thought?”

Harry shook his head. “No ... he was going to see her though. He never ... she’s been in a coma at St. Mungo’s the entire time.”

“Bloody hell!” Ron exclaimed. “So your mum’s alive?”

Harry nodded. “Very much so. I missed Emma and Ginny by a few minutes ... they cured her.”

All eyes in the room fell to Emma. “It wasn’t me. Ginevra did it all on her own. She’s one powerful witch.”

“She’s ... Lily-Love ... alive?” Sirius asked, shock radiating from his voice.

Harry nodded. “Da’s talking to the healer now. He’s bringing her home tonight.”

“Wow,” Draco murmured. “That’s some brilliant shit.” He blushed when Molly glared at him. “Sorry, Mrs. Weasley.”

Remus and Sirius were still staring at Harry in shock. “She’s really ... all this time ... he’s never told anyone?” Remus asked.

Harry shook his head. "No ... but apparently he recently confessed to Dumbledore who admitted to knowing the entire time."

"How did you react?" Sirius asked.

Harry could feel the anger rising in him again as he remembered. "How do you think I reacted? I punched Da in the face!"

"Did you?" Arthur asked. "I bet that he didn't like that."

"He shrugged it off. Told me that he deserved it but that the next one wasn't free."

Remus nodded. "Wow ... I don't even ..."

"Yeah ... where's Ginny? I need to see her." Harry exclaimed. He didn't want to be around all of these people, he realized. He just wanted to talk to Ginny. He wanted to get out of the room before he suffocated under the questions he didn't want to answer.

Bill smirked. "She's resting upstairs. She did some intense magic, which we now know what that entailed, and is resting now. And Potter ... keep your mouth closed when you see her."

Harry nodded; not quite understanding what Bill meant. "Right." He turned on his heel and left the room. He could hear everyone talking and his eyes flashed angrily. They didn't know how he felt. His mother had been alive all of this time and he had thought that she was dead. Now she was back and ... he didn't know how to act. And then there was Ginny ... she had not only come back but had cured his mum and returned without even communicating with him? What the hell was going through her mind?

By the time that Harry had reached her bedroom door he had gotten himself back into a right temper. He was angry at her for a reason that he didn't even understand. He banged on the door and when he didn't hear a response he spoke.

"Ginny, open the damn door!" He exclaimed. When she didn't respond again his temper rose. "Ginny! Damn it! How the hell could

you come back and not tell me and cure my mother! She's alive! Why the hell didn't you warn me before I went to the hospital! Why the bloody hell aren't you answering me? I've got a frickin house full of people and my da is bringing my mum home and ... damn it, Gin, open the door!"

The door opened and Harry's jaw hit the ground. His eyes traveled over the long hair, the full breasts, the curvaceous hips, and over the denim skirt, black knee high boots, and white blouse. He opened his mouth to speak but no sound came out. He tried again and still came up empty.

"What are you yelling about, Harry? Merlin! I was in the loo!" Ginny demanded, her hands on her hips.

Harry tried to speak again, but when nothing came out he simply took a step forward, kicked the door shut behind him, and yanked her up against him, crushing his mouth to hers.

She tasted exactly like he remembered, but now her body was basking in a scent so her that he wanted to gobble her up whole. She groaned as he raked his teeth over her neck and devoured her lips again. He turned around so that she was pressed against the door as he nibbled on her lips in between long, deep kisses, his tongue dancing with hers.

Ginny was gasping. The sensations that she was feeling were so incredible she wasn't sure if she was breathing. Emma had warned her that the physical part of their relationship was going to be intense, but this was crazy. Everywhere his hands touched she felt like her skin was on fire and the burn started in her toes, working its way up. His hands were in her hair now, sliding through it as another hand slid down to unbutton her blouse. This was Harry ... her Harry ... Merlin, she had missed him.

Her fingers dove into his hair as she attacked him with her mouth, desperate for a deeper taste. He had managed to get all of the buttons undone and his hands were sliding along her ribcage as he kept her pressed against the door. She wrapped her legs around his waist, locking her feet at the small of his back before she dragged his

tee-shirt over his head. He groaned and began to nibble on her ear before he followed a path of hot, wet kisses down the column of her throat and around her bra.'

His hands slid up her ribs to cup her through the soft silk and she tossed her head back and moaned. She could feel his heated gaze as it traveled down her body. Then she felt a finger follow the outline of her bellybutton ring. She was wearing the dangling G today.

"I like this," he murmured, bending his head so that he could kiss around it. "I really like this."

She laughed as she dragged her hands over his chest. "I was hoping that you would. That was some hello, Harry."

He grinned and buried his face in the crook of her neck. "I missed you. Merlin, you look ... I've never seen anyone so beautiful in my life. You took my breath away."

She smiled as he carried her over to one of the chairs. "I missed you too ... I feel like I'm on fire."

"Me too. The things you do to me." He brought his lips back to her throat and she gasped.

"Harry!"

He pulled back before he gently began to re-do the buttons on her blouse. "Yeah?"

"Do you remember what I told you? About how ... my senses they magnified?"

He nodded. "Yeah."

She gulped. "That was so intense. I couldn't breathe."

He grinned and kissed her softly. "I'm glad I can take your breath away."

She blushed and he grinned as he watched the flush cover her entire body. He buttoned the last button up and then he lifted her shirt up a bit to play with her ring.

“Has anyone else seen this yet?”

Ginny shook her head. “No ... Mum’s going to kill me if she does.”

He laughed. “It’s kind of sexy.”

She laughed. “Hmm, I was hoping you’d like it, among other things.”

“What other things? I don’t know if you could possibly surprise me anymore. I love your hair and ... your body ... your ... Merlin Ginny ... every guy in school is going to try to kill me.”

She grinned. “Well, that’s alright ... when I show all those girls just who you belong too; they’ll realize it as well.”

He smiled. “Yeah.” His hands played gently with her hair, but he didn’t say anything else. Finally, Ginny spoke up.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

He shook his head. “You brought her back.”

It hadn’t been a question but she nodded. “I did.”

“She’s alive Ginny ... she’s been alive the entire time ... how could he not tell me?”

“What did James say, Harry?”

“That he didn’t know and then Mum said that she didn’t want me to know. That it was no way for me to remember her, lying in a coma. She’s coming home in about an hour.”

She nodded. “That’s good news. You’ll get to spend Christmas with both of your parents.”

He nodded. "Yeah."

"I expected you to be angrier ... I felt your anger earlier ... it was so intense I thought for sure that you were going to blow something up and I was on the verge of going to you when I felt ... you just completely calmed down."

"Mum ... she ... she was holding me in her arms and telling me not to be angry at Da ... I don't know, I was surprised I calmed down so much too." He replied.

She laughed. "Are you alright?"

He nodded, cuddling her closer and kissing her softly on the lips. "I am now that you're here."

She smiled. "Come on, let's go downstairs and wait for James and Lily to arrive."

"Okay."

Ginny climbed off of his lap and went to go fix her hair in front of the mirror before she took his hand in hers and they headed back down into the living room. Everyone looked up when they entered the room.

Bill grinned. "Well, didn't expect you two to return to us so early."

Molly pursed her lips as she looked at them. "Hmm."

Ginny thought that it was best not to respond and instead curled up on Harry's lap on the couch in between Lexy and Tonks. She smiled at Tonks. "How are you feeling?"

"Like I'm ready to pop. Three more weeks of this and I'm done."

Ginny laughed and placed her hand on Tonks' stomach. She could feel the heartbeat of little Daniel and she knew instantly that it wasn't going to be three weeks. "He's ready to come out soon. Two weeks tops and little Daniel Lupin here will enter the world. Maybe he'll even show up before Christmas"

Tonks grinned. "Ooh, I hope you're right."

Ginny laughed and when she moved her arm accidentally brushed Lexy's and a storm of emotions flew through her. Her eyes met Lexy's as she experienced them all, but the one that stood out the most was the little tiny heartbeat that she felt. "Lexy?"

As Lexy looked into Ginny's eyes she knew instantly that Ginny had seen what was inside of her. "Yes, you're feeling that right."

"You're pregnant?" Ginny asked, keeping her voice low as her eyes darted to Sirius', who was holding Lexy on his lap and talking to Remus.

She nodded. "Yes."

Ginny smiled. "May I?"

Lexy nodded and allowed for Ginny to place her hand on her flat stomach as Sirius glanced down curiously.

"What'cha doing, Gorgeous?"

Ginny could feel the movement of the baby and she smiled. "Would you like to know the sex?"

Lexy smiled. "You can tell me?"

Ginny nodded. "Yes."

"Sex?" Sirius asked, a puzzled look on his face.

"It's a girl."

"What's a girl?" Sirius asked, his voice rising now so that it reached the entire room.

Lexy gulped and she looked at Tonks who nodded at her. "Our baby. I'm pregnant, Sirius, two months."



Sirius' jaw dropped open. "That's ... no you're not ... we said we ... we don't want any kids."

Tears poured down Lexy's cheeks as she jumped off of his lap. "No, you prat! You don't want kids! I do! Why the hell do you think that I didn't tell you?"

She hurried out of the room as Sirius stared after her in shock.

Molly glared at him. "You are an insensitive bastard, Sirius! You go after your wife right now and you tell her how much you love her and that baby! Go!"

Sirius simply nodded and hurried after his wife. He found her in their bedroom, packing her suitcase.

"Lex, what are you doing?"

"What does it bloody look like I'm doing? I thought maybe that it would work ... but I was a fool. It's over Sirius ... I want children." Tears continued to stream down her cheeks as she sobbed. "I want children so much!"

"Lex ... please, I love you, don't leave me."

Lexy shook her head. "I know you love me. But it's our baby that you don't love. I can't stay with you when you don't want our baby."

"Lex, come on! I just found out, give a bloke time to adjust!" Sirius demanded as she continued to pile clothes into her suitcase. "Where are you going to go?"

"To my parents' house. I'll see you when school starts up again."

She was halfway to the door when he grabbed her arm and whirled her around. "You're not just going to walk away from me!"

"Let go of me," she whispered.

“No ... I love you. We need to talk about this.”

“Okay, Sirius, let’s talk. Do you want this baby?”

Sirius was silent for a few moments and when the tears began to pour from her eyes again he sighed. “I don’t know.”

“Well, until you do know, I won’t be here.”

She tugged her arm free and slammed the door shut behind her. Sirius stood there staring at the door, wondering just what he had done.

Lexy was half-way down the stairs when James and Lily came out of the fireplace. She wiped the tears from her eyes but it was too late, James had already seen her and then them.

“Lexy, what’s wrong? What did Padfoot do?” He asked as he hurried over to pull her close.

“Nothing. So this is Lily Potter? It’s an honour to finally meet you.”

Lily smiled warmly. “And you. I have a great respect for the woman who can tame Sirius. Now why don’t you tell us what’s wrong?”

“I’m pregnant.”

Lily grinned. “Oh, that’s wonderful! Sirius would make such a wonderful father!”

Lexy laughed. “I think he would. But since he can’t decide if he wants the baby or not, we’ll leave that discussion for another day. I’m sorry, James, but I can’t spend Christmas here. I’m going to my parents’ house. It was nice to meet you Lily.” She hurried forward and disappeared in the fireplace.

James’ eyes hardened as he looked after. “What the hell did she mean by that? Sirius doesn’t want the baby?”

Lily shrugged. “I don’t know. You should go talk to him.”

James nodded. "I will. Just let me ... come on." He held her hand tightly in his before he stepped into the living room. All eyes fell upon them when he entered the room. "Everyone ... Lily's home."

Remus stood up and he grinned, stepping forward to pull Lily into his arms and then he gave her a small kiss on the lips. "Welcome home."

Lily smiled and hugged him tightly. "It's good to be here."

James kept an arm comfortably around her waist. "Alright, so you know Moony. That hugely beautiful pregnant woman is Mrs. Nymphadora Tonks Lupin, better known as Tonks. You met Ginny who I see is quite cozy on Harry's lap; Emma Stanton is sitting next to Charlie Weasley; then Bill Weasley; Bill's fiancée Miss Fleur Delacour; Fred Weasley; George Weasley; Ron Weasley; Hermione Granger; Draco Malfoy; Arthur Weasley; and the lovely Molly Weasley."

Lily smiled. "It's nice to meet you."

James nodded as he helped her sit down.

"James, I can move on my own." She protested.

He smiled. "I know. Indulge me." He leaned down to kiss her softly. "I have to go knock some sense into Sirius. I'll be back."

Harry watched his father leave the room and he smiled at his mum who was sitting behind him on the chesterfield as Ginny cuddled on his lap. "Hi Mum."

She ran her fingers gently through his hair. "Hi sweetheart."

"What kind of sense does Da have to talk into Uncle Sirius?" He asked.

Tonks sighed. "He doesn't want the baby, does he?"

Lily shook her head. "From what I got from Lexy ... he doesn't know."

Molly walked over to take a seat next to Lily. "James will smarten him up, dear, don't you worry. It's nice to finally meet you. Harry could definitely use a mum around."

"Hey!" Harry said, his voice pretending to be offended. "I'm insulted. I can bloody well take care of myself."

"Harry, language!" Molly exclaimed, giving him a small cuff on the head and making Lily smile.

"If you've been giving him that motherly role model, then I'm sure he's been doing just fine."

Molly blushed. "Oh, thank you. So dear, would you like anything at the moment? I'm sure I could get Maddy or Mickey to bring you a drink or some food maybe?"

Lily shook her head. "I'm fine, Molly, really." She turned to look over at the two small house elves that had wandered into the party. "Good evening Maddy, Mickey."

"Lady Lily," Maddy sobbed. "Tis true! You is back!"

Lily nodded. "I'm back. Have you been taking good care of my men for me?"

Maddy nodded. "Always my lady! I is keeping my eye on them, I is."

Mickey smiled. "We is honoured you is back, my lady."

Lily smiled. "Why is it, that after all these years you still don't call me Lily?"

Maddy shook her head. "Tis disrespectful, my lady. You is the lady of the manor ... Master James and Master Harry are different."

Lily smiled. "Alright." She accepted the glass of orange juice that Maddy pushed into her hand.

“Drink it up, my lady, it will make you strong.”

Lily grinned. “I promise, I’ll drink every drop.” She turned to the room in general, taking a deep breath. It felt odd to be back but she knew that she needed to act normal if she wanted everyone to act normal around her. “So ... I think that I need to be updated on past events as I remember James talking to me, but I’m sure there are many things that I missed. Who wants to go first?”

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As Lily was downstairs getting to know everyone, James headed up the stairs to Sirius’ room. He banged on the door and then didn’t even wait for his friend to answer it, he just pushed it open. Sirius was sitting on the bed, his face in his hands. He looked up at the sound but then he turned back to his hands.

“What the bloody hell is wrong with you?”

“She’s having a baby girl ... my baby girl.”

James nodded. “Yes, she is! And what the hell are you doing about it? Instead of being happy and excited you tell her that you don’t know if you want the baby and then sit in here and mope! You’re lucky she didn’t bloody well hex you!”

“A baby Prongs ... a little girl.”

“I heard you, Padfoot ... what are you afraid of?” James asked.

“A tiny little girl ...”

“Snap the hell out of it!” James exploded, punching his friend in the arm. “Yes, you’re having a baby girl! Do you want the baby, Sirius?”

Sirius gulped. “Of course I want the baby!”

“Well, you sure as hell didn’t tell your wife that!”

Sirius stood up, his eyes flashing angrily. “Piss off, Prongs! It’s my

fucking life! At least I didn't keep the fact that my wife was in a sodding coma a secret from my own bloody son!"

James paled. "That was different! And we're not talking about me! We're talking about the fact that you're wife is pregnant with your child and that you don't give a damn!"

"What the hell kind of father am I going to be, Prongs? What I can I do? My father was a fucking abusive drunk and my mother was an over-controlling evil bitch! I hated my parents! That's what I come from! How the hell do I know that I won't turn out to be just like them? And have my kids grow up hating my fucking guts! Have you ever thought about that, James?"

James shook his head. "You're wrong. You're nothing like you're parents, Sirius. You never have been and you never will be. You were amazing with Harry as a child. Lily and I always said that you would make a great father when the time came. You're just scared. But I can tell you this much, if you love your wife as much as you say you do, then you better go make it up to her or you're going to lose her. Do you want your baby? Do you want Lexy? Or do you want to lose them both?"

Sirius gulped. "I can't lose Lex ... and I sure as hell can't lose this baby. I'm going to be father."

James grinned. "You're going to be a father."

Sirius grinned. "I'm going to get Lex ... thanks Prongs."

James nodded. "Anytime and Sirius?"

"Yeah?" Sirius asked from the doorway.

"When you're holding that tiny baby girl in your arms, you'll know that you made the right choice."

Sirius smiled. "I don't have to wait that long. I already know that I made the right choice. Lexy's my life and now this baby is part of that. I'm not going to lose them because I was too stupid and scared."

James grinned. "Good. Hurry back too ... Lily wants to see you."

Sirius nodded. "I will and Prongs?"

"Yeah?"

"I understand why you kept it a secret. I forgive you."

James nodded, tears in his eyes. "Thank you." When he opened his eyes again, Sirius was gone.

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## **Chapter 65: Groveling and Talking**

**Author's Notes:** plz review! and yay kate and good old frying pans!

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### **Chapter LXV – Grovelling and Talking**

Sirius stood outside of the cottage in Ireland that he knew was the home of the O'Bryans. He looked around, his breathing heavy as he recalled his conversation both with James and Lexy. He was going to be father. He closed his eyes and gently knocked on the door. A few minutes later, Garrett O'Bryan opened the door. He stood tall, almost as tall as Sirius who was six feet even. He had dark brown wavy hair and his misty green eyes, so like his daughter's, gave Sirius an evil glare.

"Black."

"Garrett. Is Lex here?"

Garrett nodded. "Alexis doesn't want to see you."

Sirius nodded. "I know. But I need to see her. I was an idiot and I need to talk to her."

Garrett leaned against the door jamb casually. "So? Doesn't mean that I'm going to let you. You hurt my baby girl, Black ... I'm pretty sure that I warned you about doing that when we first met."

Sirius shrugged. "So you did and I'm pretty sure that I told you that I wouldn't do it intentionally. I need to talk to her."

"Too bad."

"Damn it, Garrett! Don't be an arse! I need to talk to her."

"Garrett Michael O'Bryan!" Julianna O'Bryan shrieked from behind them. Her bright blonde hair was cut short and curly as her dark blue eyes glared at the two men. "Is that Sirius on the doorstep?"

Garrett's ears turned red. "No."

"Good day, Julia," Sirius called out.

He grinned when Julianna grabbed him by the arm and yanked him inside but then his smile faded when he was slapped in the arm with a frying pan. She hadn't been able to reach his head.

"OW!"

"You insensitive bastard! How dare you hurt my daughter that way?"

The frying pan managed to hit him in the head that time as he had ducked to avoid her and he stumbled backwards as Garrett glared at him. He grabbed her arm to prevent another hit and then yelped when Garrett grabbed a fistful of his hair to turn him towards him before he ploughed his fist into his face. He pulled himself away from Julianna and turned to Garrett.

"Alright, I made a bloody mistake! What is this beat the bloody crap out of Sirius day?" He demanded, rubbing a hand over his head which was bleeding from the side along with the blood from his nose.

Garrett grinned. "No, but I think we could make it a monthly special."



His arm swung out again but Sirius ducked and pulled out his wand.

“Don’t make me stun you! I’m not going to fight you two. I made a mistake alright and now I’m here to make it right again. Now where the hell is Lex?”

“What the hell is going on down here?” Lexy asked from the stairs, her eyes traveling over her parents and her husband.

“Nothing Alexis, go back upstairs.” Garrett replied. “Your mother and I are handling it just fine.”

Lexy rolled her eyes and then she took a closer look at her mother and Sirius. “Mum! Did you hit Sirius with a frying pan?”

Julianna shrugged. “Well, I was going to cook up some dinner but then I heard your father ... and well it was the only thing that I had handy. It did make a satisfying bang when it hit his empty head full of fluff!”

Garrett grinned. “I had my fist. I thought it was a pretty good weapon.”

Sirius was ignoring them both but instead looked up at his wife. “Lex ... I need to talk to you.”

Lexy reached down to take his hand. “Come on upstairs, we need to take a look at that head wound.”

He squeezed her hand gently as he followed her up them, her parents grumbling behind them. She pulled him into her old bedroom and closed the door in her parents face and then put the appropriate charms on the door.

“That will keep them from injuring you further, though I can’t promise to restrain myself.”

Sirius nodded. “I know.”

She pushed him down onto the bed and then leaned over him to check the cut on his head. He watched her as she went into the

bathroom for a wet washcloth. She leaned over him again to dab at his head and he slipped his arm around her waist, pulling her down into his lap. She tried to get up but he held on.

“Sirius, let me go.”

“No,” he murmured. He slid his hands around so that they were resting on her stomach and then he looked into her eyes.

Her breathing was heavy as she looked back at him. “I need to finish cleaning this before I can heal it.”

“Lex —”

“No, I don’t want to talk to you right now.” She climbed off of his lap and pointed her wand at his head, slowing using a healing spell as she wiped the blood up. “You should be alright, maybe a little tender. I know my mum has a good arm. Da taught her how to play baseball and she’s got a wicked good swing.”

Sirius smiled. “Aye she does. I wasn’t expecting it from her, Garrett yes, but not Julia. I’m sorry, Lex.”

Lexy closed her eyes and took a step back. “I don’t want to hear an apology.”

“No, I mean,” he reached over to grab her hand and against her protest he pulled her back down onto his lap. “No, you need to listen to me. I’m sorry for how I responded, but not for what I said.”

“You don’t want the baby, Sirius. How can I be with someone like that?”

He shook his head no and kissed her fingers. “It’s not that I don’t want the baby ... I’m scared. I’m so bloody terrified.”

“Of what?” Lexy asked, her voice coming out in almost a whisper.

“Me. How am I going to be as father? My parents were horrible. The worst parents ever. My father was an abusive drunk, Lex, and hell,

you've met my mum's portrait! What if I turn out like them?"

Lexy shook her head no as she gently brushed his hair out of his eyes. "You won't. First of all, you're nothing like you're parents, something you realized a long time ago when you were sorted into Gryffindor. From what I've heard from James and Remus, you were wonderful with Harry when he was little and I know you. You're going to be a good father. And if you aren't well ... I'll always be here to keep you in line."

"Yeah?" He asked, bringing her hand to his lips.

She nodded. "Yes."

He placed his hands on her stomach again. "A baby girl, eh?"

She smiled. "Yeah, a baby girl."

He grinned. "I'm going to love both of you so much and take the best possible care of both of you. I won't let you down again, Lex. The scariest moment in life was when you walked out of that door. It was worse then when I realized I was going to Azkaban for a crime I didn't commit. That I knew I could survive ... but if I lost you ..."

"Do you want this baby, Sirius?"

"How can you ask me that? Of course I do. I love you. I love you so much and even through all those fears that were haunting me ... I loved our baby girl too. I want you and I want her ... I want both of you more then anything."

Lexy smiled and kissed him softly on the lips, tears in her eyes. "If you ever scare me like that again I'm going to —"

"Hex off my bits?" Sirius supplied as he ran his fingers through her hair.

"No, cut them off with manicure scissors." When he winced she grinned and kissed him. "I love you."

"I'm so sorry, Lexy ... I was a jerk, a prat, an idiot, an arse ... I love you."

She nodded. "I agree and I love you too." She brought her lips to his for another long kiss and then she pulled back and smiled at him. "Oh, and Sirius?"

"Hmm?" He asked.

Lexy grinned at him. "If you think that you're done grovelling, you've got a long way left to go."

He opened his mouth as if to comment and then grinned. "I know. I'll make it up to you, everyday for the rest of my life if need be."

She smiled. "Good ... because you're going to have a long way to go."

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Everyone was up late at Potter Manor because of Ginny's return and because of Lily. But finally around one in the morning, everyone went up to bed. Lily followed James up to the master bedroom and when they stepped inside she stopped. It all felt the same but she was older. She had been in a coma for eleven years, four years of which she had been mentally unstable before that. Now her son, her precious little baby boy was a sixteen year old young man. James turned to look at her.

"Lil, are you alright?"

Lily smiled at him and walked towards him, cupping his cheek in her hand. "I'm fine, Jamie." She stood on her toes and kissed him softly on the lips. "I've been wanting to do that all day."

He grinned. "I love you."

"I love you too."

"I uh ... I mean, you're old clothes are still here but I guess you'll have

to go shopping for new ones and not to mention the craziness that's going to come about when the news comes out about you being alive ... it's going to be a pretty intense few weeks." James replied.

Lily nodded. "I know. I'd much rather wear an old shirt of yours."

He grinned. "Well ... of course." He rummaged through his dresser and pulled out one of his old Pride of Portree jerseys. It was long enough that it went to her knees. "Um, do you want to maybe take a long bath or something?"

"James, are you nervous?"

"About what? Merlin Lily, I missed you so much and I just ... I can't quite believe that you're here."

She smiled and walked over to kiss him again. "I'm here. I'm not going anywhere." She patted him gently on the cheek and with the jersey in her hand headed into the bathroom.

She closed the door behind her and took a deep breath. The day had taken a toll on her naturally and she knew that James was more cautious around her. She didn't blame him of course but it still made her feel uneasy. He was so handsome and had only grown more so as he had gotten older. She stood in front of the mirror and looked at herself. Her auburn coloured hair was still bright with those tints and reflections of chestnut. Her bright emerald green eyes were smiling and even though her skin was pale she felt healthy. She knew that she was going to have to work on a few things like getting her strength back, physically that was. She still felt a little weak, not that she would say as much to James. She remembered how much he hovered when she was sick or pregnant. Pregnant, she thought, holding a hand to her stomach. The last time that they had been together when she was whole they had planned on having another baby. She shook the thoughts from her mind and pulled her wand out of her pocket.

James had given it back to her when they had returned to the manor. It felt familiar in her hand but her magic was fragmented. She couldn't explain how she knew this but she could feel it. Ginny had been there,

clearing her mind of its obstacles and the pain but now she needed to work on her magic. She could feel the power of it but she could also feel that it was broken in a way that she couldn't explain but could feel. She would have to tread carefully on it and learn how to pace herself before she could use it on a regular basis again. She shook the thoughts from her mind and placed her wand on the counter.

She brushed her teeth and her hair and changed into the jersey before she went back into the bedroom. James was sitting on the bed in his boxers flipping through a book on the nightstand that she recognized as a journal.

"A journal, James?" She asked as she sat down on the bed next to him.

He nodded. "Yeah ... I started keeping it right after you ... I thought maybe you'd like to read them. I have eleven of them."

Lily nodded. "Yes, I would. Thank you."

He smiled. "You're welcome." He kissed her softly and then pulled her under the covers with him. He cuddled her close into his arms, kissing her cheeks and her neck. "I love you. I've always loved you."

She smiled, basking in the smell and feel of him. "I love you too." She stayed cuddled in his arms there, neither one of them were talking, just basking in the feel of each other. Soon she could hear his contented snores and she stifled a laugh. She lied there a bit longer and then she snuck out of bed, rolling a pillow into his arms so that he wouldn't notice that she was gone. She found his fuzzy black robe on the back of the door and wrapped herself in it before she headed downstairs, wide awake.

She wasn't tired and didn't think that she could sleep at the moment. A nice hot cup of cocoa would make her feel better and maybe help her sleep a bit. She was just about to open the kitchen door when she heard voices on the other side.

"So what did you learn in Tibet?" Harry asked.

“Mostly just to control things that I had already learned,” Ginny replied. “I learned so much, Harry. I’m glad that I went.”

“I’m just glad that your home now.”

Lily pushed open the kitchen door just in time to see Harry place his hands on Ginny’s hips where she was straddling him in his chair. Her arms were wrapped around his neck as they kissed. She blushed and closed the door behind her. It was odd to see her son kissing a young woman when she still thought of him as her baby boy. The baby boy that used to cuddle into her neck and twine his fingers around her hair and the baby boy that used to plant wet kisses on her cheeks and lips. She closed her eyes, lost in memories until her eyes snapped open at the voices again.

“I really think that you should go on up to bed, Harry,” Ginny said.

“Only if you come with me.”

“Harry!” She exclaimed and Lily was pretty sure she was blushing.

“I’m only kidding. Aren’t you even tired just a little bit?” He asked.

“No, I’m still running on New York time. Go to bed. I’ll be fine.”

He sighed loudly. “Alright.” Lily opened the door again just as they kissed but as she went to leave they pulled back and Harry smiled at her. “Hi Mum.”

Lily smiled. “Hello, sorry to interrupt.”

Ginny blushed. “Don’t worry about its, Mrs. – Lily, Harry was just going up to bed.”

He sighed and lifted Ginny off of his lap before he stood up, kissing his mum’s cheek before he left the room. Neither Ginny nor Lily spoke right away and then Ginny moved to the stove.

“I um, I actually came down here to make some hot cocoa. Would you like a cup?”

Lily smiled. "I'd love one. I came down for the same reason. I didn't mean to interrupt you and Harry though. From what I understand, you've been away."

Ginny nodded. "Yes, I was in New York since August. I was studying there, learning how to increase my magical abilities, which is why I'm still awake. Kind of caught up in the jet lag."

Lily smiled. "I can imagine ... I just couldn't sleep. I feel like I've slept enough for the rest of my life."

"Yeah, I suppose so. How are you feeling?"

"Good. I never really got to thank you properly. You saved my life."

Ginny blushed. "It was nothing. I could do it and I wanted to. James and Harry both need you so much."

Lily nodded. "I suppose. I can't help but feel like they don't really need me. Harry's all grown up and he has you now."

"That's not the same. He needs his mum ... especially to play referee between him and James. Those two have had some problems in the last year. James has just kept too many secrets from him."

Lily nodded. "I know ... when I managed to visit Harry in a dream ... I knew what had happened ... it was like I had suddenly been opened up to his life and what was going on around him. I know about his life but at the same time, I know nothing ... does that make sense?"

Ginny nodded. "Tons of sense. I can't explain it ... but I mean I was in your mind so naturally I can sort of see where you're going with it."

"I don't know ... I'm happy to be home and so grateful to see everyone but at the same time, I feel a little lost." She replied and then she grinned. "I don't know why I suddenly feel so comfortable around you ... maybe it's because of what you did for me."

"Maybe, but also because I'm good at reading people's emotions. It's



actually what I went away to study. I'm an empath, you see."

Lily's eyebrows rose up in surprise. "That is incredible. I remember learning about empaths in seventh year and McGonagall explaining how they were very rare but had incredible power. During ... well, when I was younger, I think there were only about five in the whole world. But from what I understand it's quite an accomplishment."

Ginny nodded. "Yeah it's pretty interesting. I learned so much in so little time."

Lily smiled. "Yes ... and obviously quite a bit as you managed to bring me out of an irreversible coma. It still seems weird to say so."

Ginny poured the hot cocoa into two cups and handed one to Lily before she took a seat at the table. "It will take a while I would think, but you're doing quite well so far. I mean look at how you were doing in a room full of people you that didn't even know."

"Hmm, yes I suppose I did. You're mother is a very sweet woman who has obviously taken very good care of my son along the way."

Ginny smiled. "She met Harry the summer before Harry and Ron's second year. She's always mothered him, but then again Mum mother's everyone."

"I'm glad she has ... James, I know would have been a good father ... but I know the Marauders were quite irresponsible. I hope he did a good job ... but Harry seems to be wonderful so I don't think I should doubt my instincts."

Ginny laughed. "He did do a good job. Harry is very wonderful; of course naturally there are things that Harry needed a mother for. Like in their second year, my first year, Harry and Ron flew my dad's flying car to Hogwarts – James yelled at him yes, but then he told him it was brilliant. There have been other instances as well of course. But then James kept so many things from him ... their relationship was strained for a while. They were just getting back on their feet and then bang, Harry finds out that you've been alive the entire time and James never told him. He's been calm, but I know he's angry with

James. It's only going to be so long before he blows again."

"James told me that Harry has my temper." Lily replied. She took a sip of her cocoa and then before she could stop herself, tears began to pour down her cheeks. "I hate that I don't know that."

Ginny was up in a minute and around the table, pulling Lily into her arms. "It's alright; of course you wouldn't know that. It's not your fault."

Lily began to sob on Ginny's shoulder as the tears poured down her cheeks. Ginny ran her hands over her back and sent her some of her power to help calm her down. The energy reached Lily and she pulled back, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"What you must think of me at the moment? Crying my eyes out all over you."

Ginny shook her head. "No, not at all. You needed to get that out."

"I felt a warm energy embrace me, was that from you?"

She nodded. "I can offer comfort with my power. Did it help?"

"Yes. Thank you. I ... well I guess it's going to take me a while to really realize that Harry is not my baby boy anymore. He's almost a man. He doesn't need me like he used to." Lily replied. "But James needs me. I know that and I'm going to be the best wife to him. I'm going to make it up to him for not being here."

"It wasn't your fault that you weren't here for him. You almost died trying to protect your son ... that's courage beyond anything."

"I suppose it was. But it still isn't an excuse for everything that I've missed out on. I'll have to get used to it."

Ginny nodded. "Yes, you will, and it won't come right away. But everyone will be here for you when you need them. I know I will be and so will Harry, James, Remus, Tonks, Sirius, Lexy, my mum and dad, and anyone else that you need. We'll always be here. I can help

you with anything you need.”

Lily smiled. “Thank you ... I have a question for you, actually.”

“Sure.”

“My powers ... my magic feels ... it feels fragmented, sort of disoriented.”

Ginny nodded. “It will be for a while. I noticed that when I was in your mind.”

“Will it be out of control? I mean, can I do magic at all then? What did you see?” She asked.

Ginny shrugged. “I don’t know for sure. But I do know that it wasn’t very fragmented just a little bit. Once you build up your strength your magic should go back to normal. I do know that your power will be stronger because of everything that you suffered and defeated. But once you make yourself healthy I’m pretty positive that everything will go back to normal.”

Lily nodded. “That’s what I was hoping. I figured you would know the answer since you were the one to ... well, heal me.”

Ginny smiled. “Everything is going to be alright, you know, you don’t have to worry.”

Lily smiled. “I know.”

The kitchen door opened and they both turned, James stood there in jeans that weren’t snapped and an old tee shirt on. “Lily?”

“I’m right here, James. I just couldn’t sleep.”

He nodded. “I wondered if you would. Hi Ginny.”

“Hi James. Well, I think I’m going to go try to get some sleep. It was nice talking to you, Lily.”

Lily smiled. "You too." She watched Ginny leave the room before she turned back to her husband. "She's going to become our daughter-in-law."

James grinned. "I figured that out. She's perfect for him in every way and she keeps him sane."

"I bet she does. She's wonderful."

"Yeah she is. Are you going to come back to bed?"

Lily walked over and slipped her arms around his waist. "I love you, James. Promise me that you'll never forget that."

He glanced down at her quizzically. "Why would I forget that? I've loved you my entire life and I'm never going to stop."

She nodded, tears in her eyes. "Make love to me tonight."

James looked at her in surprise. "Lil ... you just got out of the hospital ... my Lily-Rose, you're still weak and I don't want to hurt you."

"I'm not weak, I'm fine. I feel wonderful and I'm so happy to be alive. I want you to show me."

James shook his head. "Baby ... I don't want to risk anything. You need to get better first."

"James, I'm not sick anymore. I'm better." She reached over to pull his tee-shirt over his head. "Do I have to seduce you?"

He grinned. "Well ... I admit it would be interesting. Lily, are you sure?"

She stood on her toes to kiss him softly. "I'm positive. Show me how much you love me."

He scooped her up into his arms and Disapparated into their bedroom. "I'll show you. Kiss me Lily."

She smiled up at him. "I thought that you'd never ask."

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Ginny headed down the stairs the next morning after only a few hours sleep. She was still sort of running on a different schedule so she was very much awake despite the lack of sleep. She was halfway down the stairs when she saw the blonde head in front of her.

"Hey Draco!"

He turned at the sound of his name and looked up at her. "Ginny?"

She hurried towards him. "I wanted to talk to you."

"About what?"

Her eyebrow rose slightly. "What do you think?"

He groaned. "Let me guess, you don't trust me?"

"Why should I? I haven't been here to know anything. Besides, Harry trusts you and I trust him so I guess that it doesn't really give me much choice."

Draco smirked. "So what's this about then?"

Ginny pulled him into the hallway and formed a ball of flame in her hand making Draco jump back in shock. "It's about power. I've got it and I'm not afraid to use it. If you do anything to hurt anyone that I love, this fire will be the least of your worries. Do I make myself clear?"

He nodded, his eyes never leaving the flames in her hand. "Yeah, crystal."

She smiled. "Good. I think we'll get along well then." She looked up when Harry approached them, making the fire disappear before he saw it. "Good morning."

He grinned and yanked her forward for a long deep kiss that made her entire body yearn for him. "Hi."

"Hi," she replied back with a sloppy grin on her face. "How did you sleep?"

He shrugged. "Alright ... would have been better if I could have held you in my arms."

She smiled and snuggled close. "I probably would have too. I had a long talk with your mum."

"Yeah?"

She nodded. "She needs you more than anything right now, Harry."

"I know ... I have to talk to her and I know that ... Gin ..."

She nodded and pulled him into the study, ignoring Draco who rolled his eyes at them before she closed and locked the door wandlessly behind her and then put the appropriate charms on the door. "Harry ... I know that you're still angry."

"Of course I'm angry! Damn it, my father lied to me, Gin! Yes I want to get to know my mother! But how can I forgive my father for it? I put my anger aside because she asked me to but it's not going to go away!"

Ginny reached towards him, pushing him down into the chair and straddling him and brushing his hair out of his eyes. "You need to talk to him. I noticed that there was a black eye forming on James' face ... please tell me that you didn't hit him."

"Of course I hit him! How was I supposed to react?!"

She sighed. "A bit more calmly, naturally." She ran her fingers through his hair and kissed him softly. "You need to talk to James and solve this. You two have been at odds so much lately. What is it going to take to get you to back together?"

He shrugged. "Maybe if he would stop hiding things from me! I'm not a kid anymore! I just wish that he would realize that."

"He does! Harry, he so does! It's not that ... when I felt him ... Merlin, I could feel his pain and his helplessness from New York so Emma and I came to him and when I saw him ... he was practically useless. He was sobbing and I think he had lost hope for Lily. He was scared, Harry, and I think that he had just kept it from you for so long that he didn't know how to tell you. That has to be the hardest thing to explain ... what would you have done if you were him?" Ginny asked.

He sighed. "I don't know ... but he should have told me!"

She nodded. "Yes, he should have, but he didn't. Get over it. It wasn't only you he kept this from. Sirius and Remus didn't know ... what does that tell you?"

"That he's a prat?"

She slapped him on the arm. "No! That he was scared. I'm not saying what he did was right, Harry, but right now you need to make up with him. Lily needs both of you right now and how can she do that when you're both at odds?"

He sighed. "I don't know."

"Will you talk to him?" She asked.

He slid his hands under her shirt to play with the bellybutton ring and he nodded. "Yeah I will. But I can't promise anything."

She nodded. "I guess that's all I can ask for at the moment. Now stop talking and kiss me."

He grinned. "Alright." Then he brought his mouth to hers.

She smiled as she kept her fingers in his hair as he kissed her. They had gone fast that first day, but she had known even though the sensations in her body had been strong, she had known that Harry was not going to rush her in any way. She leaned into him, nibbling at

his lips as his hands continued to glide over the bare skin of her ribs, fondling her bellybutton ring and making her laugh. It had definitely been a good investment. She wondered not for the first time how he was going to react when he learned of her tattoo ... though that little secret would remain hers for a while yet.

He moaned when she turned to angle the kiss, sliding her lips over his in such a gentle meeting that it made her heart pound in her chest. She had missed him so much and yesterday they hadn't really had much time for a reunion with the house so full of people. His hands slid up into her hair and she dragged her hands down his chest, loving the firm muscles that were there. He had grown just as much as she had and she was in love with him. It might be a little shallow to be so physically attracted to him but Merlin she was in love with his looks just as much as his brain and his heart. He had grown considerably while she was gone, now standing at six feet one inches, not quite as tall as Ron but she figured that he probably never would be. He was toned and muscled from his workouts and now had the body of a man rather than a child and she loved it. He suited her just as much as she suited him.

Harry sighed happily against her mouth as her tongue danced along his. She tasted like mints and smelt like spring and strawberries, the taste and smell was so familiar that it made him ache. She had been away from him for much too long. He fisted his hands into her hair, the soft silk of it making him ache as his heart pounded and then he pulled away and began to slide his mouth along her throat leaving wet hot kisses that made goose bumps appear on her skin. She shivered and moaned, reaching for him and holding his head to her neck as he suckled on the skin there. She ran her fingers through his hair and then she dragged his mouth back to hers. Her lips were so soft and he loved the feel and texture.

"Ginny," he murmured.

"Oh, Ginny!" A whiny voice murmured from behind them. "Oh, Ginny, you're so wonderful."

"Oh, Harry!" A voice identical to the first replied.



They turned around and rolled their eyes at the sight of the twins standing in the doorway grinning at them.

“Well, well, well, lookie what I found, Gred?”

“It is something, Forge.”

“What do you want?” Ginny asked. “Can’t you see that we’re a little busy at the moment?”

George shrugged. “Didn’t look busy to us.” When Ginny’s eyes darkened he swallowed. “We haven’t forgotten about our little agreement, you know. You win on the prank war.”

“Only because we can’t find those damn photos,” Fred muttered making Harry laugh.

George nodded. “Yeah, but James is looking for you, Harry. He has to take your mum back to St. Mungo’s for a check up and he thought that you’d like to go.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah I would. Thanks, George.”

“No problem. He says that they’re leaving in about fifteen minutes.”

The twins left the room and Ginny turned back to Harry, running her fingers gently through his hair to try to tame it. “This is your chance, you know.”

“To what? Talk to my Da?”

She nodded. “And your mum. Are you going to be alright?”

“I guess I have to be. I just wish that we would stop being interrupted. I missed your lips almost as much as I missed you.”

She laughed and kissed him softly. “I know what you mean. We’ll find some good broom cupboards at school.” She kissed him again before she climbed off of his lap. “Alright, go find your parents, and Harry?”

“Yeah?”

“Don’t make me yell at you later. Control your temper and talk to them.”

He sighed. “What would I do without you?”

She grinned. “You definitely wouldn’t stay in line now, would you?”

He laughed. “Nag, nag, nag.” He leaned down to kiss her softly and then he left the room, hoping that he could do as she asked.

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## **Chapter 66: Learning to be a Family Again**

**Author's Notes:** plz review!!

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### **Chapter LXVI – Learning to be a Family Again**

Harry stepped into the entrance way just as Sirius and Lexy came out of the fireplace. He grinned at them when he saw Sirius lovingly holding her close as she stumbled.

“Hi, you guys.”

Lexy smiled. “Hi Harry. How’s everything going over here?”

He shrugged. “As well as can be I suppose. What about for you two?”

Sirius grinned and kissed his wife softly. “Great. We’re having a baby girl.”

Harry grinned at the look of pure joy that was radiating from his godfather’s eyes. “Congratulations! I think that you’ll be a great da, Uncle Sirius.”

"I always said so," Lily replied from behind them.

Sirius' face paled as he watched her step into the room. "Hey Lily-Love."

She smiled at him and then she stepped forward and pulled him close, burying her face in his shoulder. "Oh, handsome, I did miss you!"

He laughed and kissed her cheek. "Me too. I'm sorry that I wasn't here to greet you last night."

She pulled back and smiled up at him. "Speaking of ..." She reached out and cuffed him one across the head.

"Ow!"

"Sirius Ignatius Black! If you ever treat your wife like that again I'm going to do a lot more damage then shrinking your bits! Do you understand?" Lily exclaimed.

Sirius nodded. "Lil – I apologized to Lex and I –"

"Apologized is not enough!"

Lexy smiled. "Thanks, Lily, but he knows he has a way to go. Lots of grovelling, right dear?"

Sirius sighed. "Tons. Don't hurt me, Lily-Love."

Lily laughed. "Baby. But you get off the hook this time." She stood on her toes to kiss his cheek. "I missed you."

He nodded. "I missed you too."

James stepped into the room and his eyebrow rose. "Jeesh, Padfoot! Trying to steal my wife with your own standing there!"

Sirius grinned. "It was worth a shot." He slipped his arm around his wife and then looked his friend in the eye. "Thanks Prongs."

James nodded. "Anytime." He noticed Harry standing near the fireplace and he smiled. "I'm assuming that the twins found you."

Harry nodded. "Yeah."

"I don't know how long we're going to be at the hospital but I'm hoping not too long since it is Christmas Eve."

"I don't even know why I have to go back. I feel just fine and besides it was Ginny that brought me back not them." Lily replied stubbornly.

"I know, Lil, but they want to make sure everything is great. Then we'll come home, alright?"

She nodded. "Alright."

"How are we getting there?" Harry asked.

"We're driving. I side-apparated your mum home last night and she was a little dizzy and I think floo might be the same so we'll take the car."

Harry nodded as he followed his parents out into the garage. "Want me to drive?"

James turned and tossed him the keys to the new car he had bought; a Rolls Royce in dark blue. "Sure, get in."

Lily sat in the back and quietly watched the two of them. The conversation was polite but they were so tense. She wondered how long it would take for one of them to blow.

Once they were driving along the Scottish roads, James spoke up.

"Well, are we going to have this out at some point or are we going to continue on this way during the Christmas break?"

Harry shrugged. "Depends."

"On what?"

“On your explanation. You’re the one keeping all the bloody secrets ... elementals, prophecy, Potter legacy, and now Mum.”

James sighed. “First of all, the elementals I told you about when I was supposed to tell you about them, when your power began to take control. You didn’t have a problem with that before so don’t act like it was a big secret then. Second, the prophecy ... I would have kept that from you longer if I had the chance. No fifteen-year-old should know that he’s going to have to kill the darkest wizard of the century. No one should ever learn that about themselves. Maybe you deserved to know but that’s beside the point, the point is that I wanted to keep you safe. Third, the Potter Legacy is hardly a secret and you never thought so when I told you either, it doesn’t matter to me in the least. And lastly, your mum ... well ... I was beginning to lose hope and I thought that she might actually never wake up. So I kept it from you, yes, but that’s because I didn’t want you to see her like that.”

“I don’t buy that! Neville has known about his parents his entire life and he goes to see them. They’ve been in St. Mungo’s even longer than Mum was.” Harry replied.

James shook his head. “It’s different and you know it. Alice and Frank ... they’re awake and alive. They might not remember who their son is or what happened to them but when they do come through he can talk to them and see them. You couldn’t have done that with Lily. She was in a coma the entire time.”

Lily reached through the seats to place a hand on each of their arms. “James was right, Harry; you wouldn’t have wanted to see me like that. I wouldn’t have wanted it. That’s not the way that you should remember your mum.”

“I don’t bloody remember you at all!” He shouted. “At least I would have had something!”

Tears poured down Lily’s cheeks and she squeezed his arm gently. “But what kind of memory is that?”

He shrugged. "I don't know."

They drove in silence after that to the rest of the way of the hospital and then checked in at the front desk. Lily went off with Healer Dolan, who promised they wouldn't be any longer than an hour, leaving Harry and James alone.

James turned to his son. "We still need to talk, let's go out to the car. I'd rather do it in private."

Harry nodded as he followed his father out to the car. "I don't know what to say."

James shrugged. "Me neither. I kept it a secret, but it wasn't just from you. The healers told me that she would never wake up, that there was next to no chance, and that I was wasting my time. I couldn't let her go, Harry, because when I looked at her I realized that it was my fault that she was there."

"How was it your fault? Voldemort did that to her."

"Ah, one would think ... but I couldn't help but think, if only I had been faster and stronger, if only my powers had been as strong as they are now, if only I hadn't tried to hold him back but had taken the two of you away somewhere, if only I hadn't gotten hurt. There were so many if onlys." James replied, his voice far off. "Everyone told me that I had to let her go, that it was wrong of me to keep her alive that way. But I couldn't do it ... I couldn't let her go. I didn't think anyone would understand since they kept badgering me to let her go so I said I did but I let her live."

Harry stared at his father. He wasn't sure what to say. "If only isn't going to change anything! Mum doesn't blame you for what happened! If you should blame anyone other than Voldemort, it's Peter Pettigrew! He betrayed you! I understand why you didn't let her go, Da; you were hoping that by some chance she would come back to us. Ginny showed you that you weren't wrong to hope that. But how can I get over the fact that you never told me? I'm not a child anymore so why do you keep trying to shelter me from the world?"

James shrugged. "You'll always be my child, Harry. I know that I have to realize that you're almost an adult but there's something that you have to do as well. If you want to be treated like an adult then you have to stop acting like a child."

"I'm not acting like a child!"

James' eyebrow rose. "Yes, you are. Giving me the silent treatment? Yelling and whining about me keeping this from you? That's childish. Merlin knows I'm not perfect, Harry, but I work to be the best damn da that I know how to be. I made mistakes and I'll probably make a few more. I've kept secrets but I thought that they were for the best. There's nothing else that I could have done."

"Nothing else that you chose to do! You still kept them from me! Things that I deserved to know!"

James shrugged. "Well, you know now. I'm tired of arguing with you. I'm just tired in general. You're temper has one hell of a short fuse, something that you get from Lily. You need to accept that I kept things from you, but you know now and there's nothing more that I can do. Right now I have two concerns; one is getting the path clear with you again. You're my life, Harry, you've always been the most important thing in my life and now the second most important thing in my life has returned to me, my wife. Lily is going to need both of us more then anything in the next little while. She's been gone from the world for fifteen years. She has lots to learn, lots to remember, and lots of ground to make up. Especially with you. When she left ... the last time we were a family together you were snuggled into her shoulder, sucking your thumb and your fingers twined around her hair. Now you're practically a man. I know that you haven't really spoken to her yet, not alone. I can't imagine what's going through your mind right now but I know Lily is nervous. You're her baby boy, but you're not anymore and you don't even remember her. She needs us both. If we're going to be a family again then we need to straighten out our priorities."

Harry sighed. "And you're saying what? That it's my fault that we haven't done that yet."

“Hardly. I’m telling you to grow up. I love you and I love Lily and together I want us to be a family again.”

Harry nodded. “So do I.”

“Good, so are we all good?”

Harry shrugged. “I guess so. I do understand why you never told me. I don’t suppose that I would have understood when I was young.”

James nodded. “Especially after everything that you had gone through with the Dursleys ... I didn’t want to put you through any more pain.”

“Alright.” He was quiet for a few moments and then he leaned in and wrapped his arms around his father. He felt James sigh inwardly in relief as his arms wrapped around him as well. “I’m sorry, Da.”

“I’m sorry too.”

“I forgive you for keeping it from me. Mum’s back now and that’s all that’s important.”

James nodded and he kissed the top of his son’s head. “Exactly. I love you, Harry, and I miss not fighting with you. Do you remember those days?”

Harry laughed. “Yeah. They seem awfully far away.”

“Aye they do.”

Harry pulled back and he grinned at his father. “So now what?”

James laughed. “Now we kill time until that healer is done examining your mum. Why don’t you tell me about Ginny? Did she enjoy her trip?”

Harry grinned. “Yeah, I think she liked it a lot. She learned a lot of things and obviously became very powerful considering she ... well she learned a lot.”



James nodded. "I'm never going to be able to repay her for what she did. But I did have an idea I was throwing around to Lily this morning."

"What's that?"

"Well, I thought maybe that I could pay for a girl's night or a girl's day or something between her and whoever she wants to bring. They can go have fun and buy lots of stuff. It's the least that I can do and I figured I can make it a Christmas gift as well so she had to say yes."

Harry laughed. "I think that she'd like that."

"I hope so. Oh, speaking of Ginny ... Sirius told me that you thought you were going insane or something a few months ago, something about images of Ginny?" James asked; a look of amusement on his face.

Harry blushed. "Oh yeah ... I wasn't."

"Care to share?"

He grinned. "No more secrets, right?"

James nodded. "No more secrets."

"Ginny learned how to be telepathic."

James' eyebrow rose in surprise. "Telepathic?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah and I guess when she was practicing she thought it would be funny to send me all of these sexy images of us doing things, playing on my own fantasies as well as hers. She witnessed a dream I had once, accidentally when she was trying to get into my mind. Well, anyway, I thought I was going insane because I was just being bombarded with these images and then they would stop. I mentioned it to Uncle Sirius because I didn't understand and the only thing that I knew was that there was no way that it was Voldemort."

James laughed. "Voldemort sending you sexy images? That would be bloody priceless."

Harry laughed as well. "I think that I would be more scared of those than the death ones. Anyway, then she started talking to me in my mind, but I thought I was talking to myself. So then one day Hedwig comes with a letter telling me to picture her in my mind and say clearly that I had just received her letter and was doing what I was told. She answered in my mind. I thought that I was going insane. But then she began to explain about everything that she had learned. I had been able to reach her because she had connected with my mind and was waiting for me. But the next time I wanted to talk to her I couldn't get through. It was hard and took me nearly a week to get through to her, I used the elementals. And ... well ever since then, we've been having conversations in our minds."

"Wow," James replied.

"Exactly."

"So Ginny can listen in to any conversation you have any time she wants and vice versa? And to anyone around her."

Harry shook his head. "No I mean, she can hear people's thoughts but she has to be connected to them mentally first. She's telepathic but she has to connect. Like if she wanted to talk to you in your mind then she would have to picture you and then get past any wards you might have blocking her out. She only got past mine because my elementals know who she is and gave her entrance. And I know when she's in my mind. I can't see her but I can feel her."

James nodded. "That's some intense stuff. She's incredibly powerful ... and I must say ... she really grew up."

Harry blushed. "Er, yeah I'd say so. She uh ... she got a bellybutton ring."

James grinned. "Really?"

Harry nodded. "I've never really thought about them before, I mean,

I've seen them on other girls but ... damn it's sexy."

James laughed. "I'm guessing Molly hasn't seen that yet."

"No, not as far as I know."

James nodded. "She's beautiful. I mean, don't get me wrong, I always thought that Ginny was cute and sort of pretty, but she really blossomed into a beautiful young woman. Managed to knock up a few inches in height and filled out in all the right places ... I'm betting your eyes just about rolled out of your head when you saw her."

Harry grinned. "Oh they did! Not to mention the fact that she had on this short denim skirt and black knee high boots. I think I might have drooled."

James laughed and swung his arm around his son's shoulders. "I missed this."

Harry sighed and leaned into his father. "Me too. Da?"

"Yes Harry?"

"I'm glad we're talking again."

James smiled. "Me too."

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Lily found the two of them laughing and talking playfully like that in the car an hour later. She climbed into the back seat and her eyebrow rose slightly in surprise. They were both so handsome and they were her men. She was glad that Harry had obviously forgiven his father and she loved the easy-going relationship she could see was there. She wondered, not for the first time, how she was going to break into that and make room for herself and she wasn't even sure if she wanted to. They had such a tight and wonderful bond.

Harry climbed into the backseat next to her and kissed her cheek making her sigh. This was her baby boy, man now. "Hey Mum, did

everything go alright?”

Lily nodded as she clicked her seatbelt on and watched as James pulled out of the parking lot. “Everything went just fine. The healers are amazed and in awe over my sudden recovery. They did a bunch of tests and said that everything was normal and that my magic should be normal within a day or so and that it was just getting into sorts again.”

James smiled at her through the mirror. “There, knew you had nothing to worry about.”

Lily smiled back. “Yes well, it still seemed pointless to come here. So I noticed that the two of you have made up?”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, everything’s all worked out. Mum, I just wanted to say that I’m sorry for earlier.”

Lily glanced over at her son in surprise and reached out to run her fingers through his messy hair. “Whatever for, sweetheart?”

“For shouting out that I didn’t remember you.”

Lily sighed and cupped his face in her hands. “That’s hardly worth apologizing for. Of course you wouldn’t remember me. You were only a little baby, still a toddler and barely talking. I understand why you were frustrated. And growing up with me so sick and out of my mind ... that had to be even harder. I’m sure James kept you away from me until I fell into that coma.”

Harry looked up into the mirror and saw his father’s eyes harden. “I didn’t actually live with Da.”

“What?” Lily asked. “Why ever not?”

James sighed. “You were sick, Lil, so incredibly sick and you were dangerous. You hurt yourself and me and Moony a few times ... we took your wand away but you found other ways. It was too dangerous for Harry to be in the same house as you.”

“So where was he?”

“Dumbledore had thought that we both died that night so he had Hagrid bring him to the only place he would be safe. You had ... you threw yourself in front of Harry to save him and it placed a blood bond on him, Dumbledore calls it the ultimate sacrifice, even though you didn't die, the intention was there and the bond was still created. So for Harry to be safe, he would have to go live with someone of your blood.” James replied carefully.

“Petunia?” Lily asked. “She took him in? She took care of my son? Even after everything that ...” Tears fell from her eyes. “I knew that she would have to forgive me.”

Harry reached out and wrapped his arms around her. “Not exactly, Mum.”

“What do you mean?”

James pulled the car over to the side of the road and turned around so that he could look at them. “I was so busy trying to take care of you ... I couldn't leave you alone, Moony and I had to be there twenty-four/seven. I never got to visit Harry for four years ... it was too dangerous to leave you alone; we never knew what you would do.”

“You never visited? James! Harry was much and is much more important!”

James nodded. “I know ... but I couldn't trust you alone with Moony and there was no one else around to help me. I wrote letters and sent money and toys. It wasn't the same, I ached for him but I just kept telling myself that Petunia said that he was fine and that he was having a good life. Petunia's letters were short and lacking a great deal of details but I just thought that it was because she had never quite taken a liking to me. But then you slipped into that coma. I placed you in St. Mungo's and the same day I went to go see Harry. He was five years old.” He closed his eyes for a moment and Harry kissed his mum's cheek.

“Mum, maybe it would be easier if you saw the pensive memory?”

James’ eyes met his son’s. “I think so. Can you bring me the pensive?”

Harry nodded and he quietly instructed his elementals to bring him his father’s pensive. It was only a few moments before it appeared before them. Harry carefully set it down on the seat and nodded at James who put his memory of the day he had brought Harry home into the pensive. Lily chewed her bottom lip nervously.

“You two are making me scared as to what I’m about to view.”

Harry smiled. “I love you, Mum. And it’s not that bad.”

Lily nodded and dipped her finger into the pensive. She watched as James approached the house and everything else that followed up until he sat talking with Remus in the common room. When she came out she looked at them, tears pouring down her cheeks. She reached out to lift Harry’s shirt.

“Are there scars?”

Harry pulled his sweater over his head to show his mum his back. They were extremely faded but there were light white lines. He heard her sniff and when he pulled his shirt back on he pulled her into his arms. She clung to him, sobbing on his shoulder, her fingers fisting in his shirt. She smelt like citrus and home and he breathed it in as he held her close. When she pulled away, she was wiping tears from her eyes which were now flashing dangerously.

“Petunia did ... she let Vernon ... oh I’m going to kill them!”

“Lily,” James said cautiously. “Look I know that you want to, Merlin I do too. But we both know that that’s not the answer. It was years ago and it won’t solve anything.”

“Solve anything? James! I’m past solving anything! She’s my sister and she ... the broken dishes, the black eye, the welts on his back ... he was just a little boy. My little boy. Her nephew! How could she ...

how could she do that?" She sobbed.

Harry reached out to tug on a lock of her hair. He wasn't sure why he did it, but it seemed right and familiar before he kissed her cheek. "It doesn't matter, Mum. Besides, Da threatened to kill Uncle Vernon during the summer. He was pretty scared."

Lily reached out to place her hand over his. "You used to that as a baby."

"What?"

"When I was scolding your father ... you used to just tug on my hair and place a wet kiss on my cheek. I always thought that it was a way of trying to get your Da out of trouble."

Harry grinned. "Maybe it was."

"Come here, sweetheart," she murmured and Harry allowed her to cuddle him into her breast like she had that day in the meadow in his dream. He inhaled her scent, the scent of his mum, citrus and home, as she stroked his hair. "Now James, why don't you tell me about this summer with Vernon?"

James explained what had happened at the Grangers house. "Anyway, I told him if he ever came near us again I'd kill him. They're not worth it, Lily, and personally I don't ever want to see them again let alone even be a part of their life for a moment, even if it is to make them suffer."

Lily nodded. "I understand. But I don't know if I could ... I might have to talk to her, James."

He nodded. "I know. We'll face that when the time comes." He smiled at her before he turned around and began to drive again.

Lily stroked her hand through Harry's hair. "I'm not going to get to hold you like this anymore am I?"

Harry shrugged. "Maybe sometimes ... when no one can see."

She laughed. "You look so much like your father, handsomer though. I bet all the girls are after you in school."

He laughed. "A bit yeah, but I don't think it has to do with my looks. More to as that I'm the Boy-Who-Lived. Ginny keeps me in line though and she says that she's going to make sure that all those girls know who I belong to when we return to school."

Lily smiled. "I bet she will. I like Ginny."

Harry nodded. "I know. You told me, in my dream, that day in the meadow."

"I remember. I told you a lot of things that day."

"A lot about Voldemort."

She nodded. "Yes I did. Do you remember what I told you?"

He closed his eyes. "Yes. You said that I had accepted the prophecy a little too quickly and that you didn't think that it had sunk in yet, just what exactly I had to do. That I had to forgive Da for keeping it from me and that I had to prepare, work with Da and study as much advanced magic as I could. That Voldemort is a very powerful wizard and that I needed to be prepared for the worst. You said that Voldemort is getting stronger once more and that the Ministry of Magic is in utter chaos. You said that Voldemort was going to take advantage of that chaos and use the time to act. That he had gained the control of the giants and his followers had grown. Destruction would once again fall upon the magical community and there would be nothing that I could do to stop it. You said that the prophecy meant nothing and that we both knew that I wasn't ready to fight Voldemort face to face and win. It will be a battle to the death and it is not yet time for me to take the stand to do so. The Order can only do so much and Voldemort will lead a path of destruction. Innocent lives will be lost once again. It's time for the war to begin. It's already begun, but now, the world knows it."

Lily nodded. "You remembered that pretty clearly."



"The words have kind of been there every time I hear something about Voldemort. He has done some horrible things since then." Harry explained.

"I know." She leaned down to kiss his cheeks and his forehead. "You won't be alone in any of this either. Not only do you have the Marauders, but you have me. I love you so much and I know that it's going to take some time between the two of us to build up a relationship. I haven't been around and I can't just expect you to accept me right away. But I just want you to know that you're the most important person in my life and nothing matters more than your well-being. Alright?"

He nodded as he looked up into eyes so much like his own. "I know. But I want to accept you in my life. I want you to be there like Molly always is for her kids and me sometimes as well. To fuss over me stupidly and to kiss me goodnight and to yell at me when I do something wrong. I want a mum, I need my mum. I need you. I may not remember you so well, but the stories and things that I've heard have all been wonderful. Da used to tell me stories all the time about your time at Hogwarts, along with all of his pranks."

"Hmm," Lily said, tears in her eyes. "And of course you haven't fallen in your father's footsteps?"

Harry grinned at the hint of sarcasm he heard in her voice. "See! That's why I need you. I love you, Mum, and I'm so glad that you're here."

She kissed his forehead again. "Me too, precious, me too."

Neither one of them had realized that they had arrived back at the manor and were parked in the garage. James grinned at them. "Are you two ready to go inside? Or would you like me to leave you alone?"

Lily smiled at Harry and brushed a bit of his hair out of his eyes. "I think that we can go inside. I'd like to talk to you more though."

He nodded. "Okay."

They stepped inside and Lily and Harry went into the kitchen and took a seat around the table. Maddy served them tea and promised to not allow anyone in to bother them.

"So, this is going to sound odd, but will you tell me a little bit about your life?" Lily asked.

Harry nodded. "What would you like to know?"

"Let's start with the guests that are here."

He smiled. "Alright. Well, my first day on the school train I ran into Fred and George, who were in complete awe over my scar. I used the mirror Da gave me, the one that he used to use to talk to Sirius while they were in separate detentions, to tell him about it. He told me not to worry and that it would probably happen a lot. He said that I needed to ignore it and not to get full of myself. Ironic really, considering the stories that I've heard about him."

Lily laughed. "James always did have a big ego. Go on."

"Well, after they left, their younger brother Ron came in. He was a first year too. We got to talking and we became best friends almost instantly. Then Hermione came in. She was a bossy know-it-all. Going on and on about how she was muggleborn and didn't know anything about magic and had memorized all of her school books by heart. We thought that she was mental. Annoying too and she was everywhere, always correcting us and stuff. She wouldn't go away. She drove Ron crazy more than me. Then on Halloween, Professor Quirrell, who we later discovered was sharing a body with Voldemort, let a troll into the castle. Well, we had made Hermione cry and we knew that she was in the bathroom. So we went to go warn her but the troll was there. To make a long story short, we saved her and she lied to McGonagall to get us out of trouble. We've been best friends ever since." Harry explained.

Lily smiled. "Obviously you have followed in your father's footsteps. A mountain troll? What were you thinking?"

Harry grinned. "I wasn't. Anyway, that summer I was really upset because I had been writing to my friends and had received nothing from them. Found out this crazy house elf named Dobby was keeping my letters to prevent me from going back to school. He said that there was going to be danger there and that I shouldn't be there. I told Da when he came from work and the next day we went to the Weasleys house. Molly was great, gave us breakfast and offered to let me stay the entire summer. I agreed. That's where I first met Ginny ... she had a terrible crush on me, quite embarrassing actually and Da kept teasing me. She got over it in a few months as it was the whole Boy-Who-Lived thing. Ron's got five other older brothers. After Fred and George is Percy. He's a real git and is currently estranged from the family. He agreed with the *Daily Prophet*, that I was an attention-seeking lunatic and basically told them that if they associated with me he wasn't going to. He said some other horrible stuff about his dad. This was last year, the summer before fifth year. Then there's Charlie and Bill who you met last night. They're pretty cool and really close to Ginny."

"They sound like wonderful people, and I know that I took an instant liking to Molly." Lily replied. "But can I ask who the blonde boy is? I believe James said his name was Draco. He didn't say much last night."

Harry nodded. "He wouldn't. His name is Draco Malfoy and we hated each other's guts up until a few months ago. He comes from an old pureblood family. His parents are Lucius and Narcissa or as Uncle Sirius calls her, Cousin Cissy."

"Ah, I do know them. Not the nicest people."

"Exactly. Well anyway, Draco pretty much was from the same mould or so I thought. In August he came to me in muggle London asking me for help, begging more like it. I was shocked. Da left us alone to talk and he told me that since Voldemort had returned and his father had escaped from prison that he was now being forced into becoming a Death Eater. He didn't want to be. I'm sure there's more to it than that, but he still is ... well, he doesn't say much. Anyway, I used Legilimency on him, because naturally I didn't trust him. He had made

my life miserable, almost as much as Snape has, since I started school.”

“Snape?” Lily asked in surprise.

Harry nodded. “Yeah Severus Snape. He’s the potions master at school. Ever since my first day he’s hated my guts all because he and Da don’t get along. He’s been failing me too and my potions are brilliant! I aced my O.W.L.s but according to him I can still only scrape up an Acceptable grade. He’s a git.”

Lily nodded. “I never thought that he’d take a childhood hatred that far as to continue it on a student.”

Harry shrugged. “Dumbledore’s supposed to be keeping an eye on him since he’s marking my grades so bad and now he’s picking on Draco just as much as me. Draco was his favourite student. But I think that it’s because Snape’s a Death Eater, or he used to be and now he’s a spy for the Order. Dumbledore is the only person that really trusts him. Draco doesn’t know anything about the Order or Snape actually being on the good side, we don’t trust him enough yet. But anyway, Draco ran away from home and Da let him live here with us so that he would be safe. We’re sort of friends now. Da’s working on trying to help him get out of his betrothment.”

“He’s betrothed?” Lily asked in shock.

“Yeah to this real cow named Pansy Parkinson, she’s horrible I don’t blame Draco for not wanting to marry her. I mean she’s pretty but she’s an evil bitch – er, I mean ... sorry Mum.”

Lily laughed. “Yes, watch your language. Why don’t you tell me about Ginny now? You said that she had a crush on you. How did you two end up together? And how long have you been together?”

Harry blushed. “Oh well ... er ... she had a crush on me but it didn’t even quite last a year when she realized that I wasn’t the Boy-Who-Lived but just Harry, you know? Well, anyway we kind of ignored her a bit that second year at school. Ginny is a year younger than us and started up at Hogwarts that year. Lucius Malfoy slipped a diary into

her cauldron in Diagon Alley that summer and no one knew about it. Ginny started writing in it and it possessed her. The diary belonged to a sixteen-year-old Voldemort. Anyway she had black outs and people at school were being petrified and it came out that the Chamber of Secrets had been opened again. Towards the end of the year, Voldemort made her write her own message on the wall in blood and then go down to the Chamber to wait for him. He was sucking her soul out of her so that he could live. It was really advanced magic. Anyway, Ron and I had sort of been playing detective and we were pretty sure that we knew where the Chamber was so we were on our way to tell McGonagall when we heard about Ginny. We went to go see Professor Lockhart, the DADA teacher at the time as he was supposed to be going to save her. He was running away. So we took his wand and forced him to go down into the Chamber with us. He tried to put a memory charm on us, which backfired because Ron's wand was still broken from when we flew his dad's flying car into the Whomping Willow, long story, so it backfired and he went all crazy but he caused the cave to collapse. We were separated. Ron on one side with crazy Lockhart and me on the other."

"What happened after that?"

"Well, I kept going and I sort of rescued Ginny from Voldemort and a basilisk and then we were in McGonagall's office and Da was telling me that I had a lot of explaining to do. That summer I talked to her and I told her that I understood what she had went through and that since I was the only other person who had been touched by Voldemort like she had that I was always there to talk. We became friends pretty quickly. She wasn't my best friend but she was getting there." Harry explained. "And then ... at the end of fourth year ... she came to the manor and ... I don't know. I just started having all of these feelings that were so wrong because Ginny was my friend, my best mate's little sister and I wasn't supposed to feel like that."

Lily smiled. "So you were around fourteen?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah and Gin was thirteen, briefly as our birthdays are both in the summer. So I turned fifteen and she turned fourteen. Anyway, we were in the garden out back watching Ron trying to teach Hermione how to fly. She's terrified of brooms or heights or maybe it's

flying in general. So anyway, I don't know we were talking and tickling each other and laughing and I just kissed her."

Lily smiled. "How did she react?"

"Shocked, surprised ... told me that she had a boyfriend and then she kissed me again. I don't know, Molly interrupted before she answered me about being my girlfriend. I told the Marauders when I was upstairs practicing my elementals because I was so shocked at what I had done. I didn't want to ruin our friendship. But a few days later she told me that she wanted to be with me. We've been together ever since. So over a year now."

"Wow ... I mean ... you two are so young."

"I love her, Mum. I don't think that age matters in the least. I may only be sixteen but I love her more than anything in this world. I missed her so much when she was in New York, I felt like I had this piece of me that was missing." Harry replied. "I told Da that I was in love with her last year I remember and he said something about how he should be telling me that I'm far too young, but he was that age when he fell in love with you."

Lily laughed. "I guess he has a point. Can't be a hypocrite then. What did you say to that?"

Harry laughed. "Told him at least Ginny loved me back and that if my memory served me right from the stories I'd heard, you hated his guts at that time."

Lily laughed. "True. I never actually hated James. I just ... I didn't understand how someone who was so intelligent and so ... handsome, could be so immature and foolish. He bothered me! He was so annoying and always picking on Snape ... I don't know."

Harry grinned. "Yeah, I suppose that that would be annoying."

She smiled. "He was." She sipped her tea and then tilted her head. "Tell me more about Ginny. I had a long talk with her last night and I think she's wonderful."

"She's amazing. She's brilliant too, got next to near perfect if not perfect on all of her exams last year. Better than Hermione; though don't tell her that, Hermione's a brain." Lily laughed and he grinned. "I don't know ... how can you explain her? She's beautiful ... incredibly beautiful. When she came back from New York ... my mouth just about dropped open when I saw her. She loves Quidditch and is an amazing chaser and seeker as well. She's loyal to her friends and so comforting to them. She's the type of person that if she sees a stranger crying she would rush over to comfort them in a second. She cuddles and hugs anyone who needs it, best friends, family, me. She's wonderful like that. She's powerful too, incredibly powerful and I'm pretty curious as to where the new powers she's learned are going to take her. She's a multiple animagi, like me. I can do four animals, but Ginny's mastered two. She likes to read those corny romance stories, the one's with the half-naked characters on the front. She's ... she's full of mischief, but then again, growing up with Fred and George that was probably for safety. She was the first one to accept Uncle Sirius when he came. We introduced him to the Weasleys when he was still on the run from the law and she simply walked over and wrapped her arms around him, told him that she knew he hadn't done anything wrong then welcomed him home. Uncle Sirius holds her close to his heart for that. He flirts with her outrageously sometimes and it makes me laugh. They kind of act like brother and sister. She's almost as close to Uncle Sirius sometimes as she is to Bill and Charlie."

"Sirius needs people like that. I always said that he needed family. He's going to make such a wonderful father." Lily replied.

Harry nodded. "I know he's going to be great. Ginny has ... a heart of gold but she can be really evil too, I think that comes from the twins. She's got a temper and she's always telling me to control mine. She keeps me ... sane I guess. She keeps me happy and she's not afraid to tell me off when I do something stupid. I love everything about her. From the sprinkle of freckles on her nose to the sexy bellybutton ring she got in New York; the way her hair feels in my hands; how she can make me laugh; how she makes me feel; I love her. She's always there for me. She's the most amazing, most beautiful, most wonderful person that I've ever known and sometimes I feel like I don't deserve

her. She's just too wonderful."

Lily reached out to take his hand in hers. "She is wonderful and she sounds amazing. I can't wait to get to know her more. But you're all of those things too and of course you deserve her. You deserve the best."

He grinned. "Thanks, Mum."

"Now you're treating Ginny right, right? Being a gentlemen and romancing her properly?" Lily asked; a look of amusement on her face.

Harry grinned. "I try and if I do something to piss her off she'd tell me."

"Harry, watch your mouth."

He grinned. "On our first official date I sent her all of her favourite flowers to her room."

Lily sighed. "That's sweet. You're not doing anything ... okay I know that this is none of my business but I saw the way that you two were sitting last night. She was sitting comfortably in your lap, long deep kisses."

Harry blushed. "Um, yeah?"

"I don't want you two rushing into anything that you're not ready for. You take it slow and has James told you everything you need to –"

"Mum!" Harry exclaimed in embarrassment. "Da and I had the talk. Actually, Da, the Marauders, and I had the talk. Ginny and I haven't ... I mean ... we won't rush into anything."

Lily smiled and leaned over to kiss his cheek. "I just made you embarrassed. Every mother's privilege. I enjoyed it a little too much I think."

Harry laughed. "I think so too. I love you and I'm so glad that you're



here.”

She pulled him close for a hug. “Me too. I’m glad that you can talk to me so easily too. I was jealous of the bond I saw between you and James, worried that I would never get the chance to form one with you.”

He smiled. “No chance of that. I’ll tell you anything that you want to know. My life’s an open book.”

She laughed. “I’ll remember that. I think that we’re going to be alright. The two of us that is.”

Harry shook his head. “No, the three of us. I’ve finally got my family back.”

James stepped into the room just as Harry hugged Lily tightly. “Am I interrupting or is it alright to come in now?”

Lily smiled at him. “No it’s fine, James. Harry and I are wonderful.” She reached a hand out to her husband who stepped over and kissed her deeply. “Mmm, missed you.”

Harry grinned and then he tilted his head to look at them a wicked gleam in his eye. “Da, can I ask you something?”

James glanced at Harry and sighed. “I think that I’m afraid to say yes. You’ve got that mischievous look in your eye.”

Harry grinned. “Well, I was just wondering ... now that you and Mum are back together and everyone else is well ... when are you two going to give me a baby brother or sister?”

James paled and Lily laughed until tears fell from her eyes before she rushed forward to kiss Harry’s cheeks. “You want siblings, do you?”

Harry grinned. “I think it would be neat. Okay, so there would be a huge age difference, but don’t you want any more kids?”

Lily brushed her fingers through his hair. “I would love to have more

children.”

James slipped his arms around Lily’s waist. “Children? Wow.”

Harry grinned. “Well, it will give you something to think about.”

James grinned and kissed his wife’s neck. “I’m thinking that it’s a great plan. More mini-Marauders running around.”

Lily laughed. “Hmm ... we’ll see.”

They all turned at the sound of the kitchen door opening and Ginny grinned at them. “Sorry to interrupt, but Tonks just went into labour. Remus has rushed her to St. Mungo’s with the emergency portkey.”

James nodded. “Alright, let’s go then. Where’s Padfoot and Lexy?”

“They already headed that way. The whole house is getting ready to go.” She explained.

Harry’s stomach dropped. “Oh boy, I’m going to be a godfather.”

Ginny’s mouth opened in surprise. “You are? You never told me that.”

“Forgot until just now.” He replied, holding a hand to his stomach.

Lily laughed. “Like father like son. I believe James was a bit queasy upon your birth as well and Sirius was next to no help.”

Harry grinned. “I remember. I saw the memory. It was very amusing.” He walked over to Ginny and kissed her softly. “Sorry I didn’t tell you.”

She sighed. “It’s okay. I understand that you were a little concerned with other things. Come on, let’s go see Baby Lupin.”

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They spent the afternoon and much of the evening waiting outside the room for news of Tonks. Finally after almost eight hours, Remus opened the door. “Sirius, James, Harry, you can come in now. Lexy,

Lily, and Ginny as well of course.”

Harry walked inside, holding Ginny’s hand tightly. Tonks, her hair bubblegum pink was sitting up in the bed holding a tiny reddish scrunched up baby in her arms.

“Everyone, I’d like for you to meet our son, Daniel James Lupin.” Remus replied as he sat on the bed next to Tonks.

Lexy smiled. “He’s beautiful, Remus, Tonks, and so tiny.”

“Tiny?” Tonks exclaimed. “This little bugger is nine pounds and eight ounces! Cuter then hell though. And just look at his tiny little nose.”

Ginny laughed. “And Remus is still standing so that’s a good sign. I felt a bit of pain coming from him before.”

Tonks laughed. “He says I broke his fingers.”

James shuddered. “I remember that pain.”

Lily rolled her eyes. “Men are such babies.”

“Would you like to hold him, Harry?” Tonks asked. “After all, you are his godfather.”

He grinned as Remus placed the tiny bundle into his arms. He wasn’t sure how to hold anything so tiny and he grinned at Ginny when she carefully adjusted his arms. “Hey Dan, I’m your godfather, Harry.”

Daniel let out a big yawn and closed his eyes.

“He’s cute,” Harry murmured.

Remus grinned. “I’m a father.”

James slapped Remus on the back with a grin. “You most certainly are Da, so now what are you going to do?”

Remus smiled warmly at his wife. “Take my family home with me.”

James grinned as his eyes turned towards Lily and Harry. "Me too."

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## **Chapter 67: Christmas Part I**

**Author's Notes:** im dedicating this chapter to Jim who mentioned he would like to see some more Sirius/Ginny scenes - i love when ppl read my minds! thanks for response!  
hope u enjoy it and plz review!

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## **Chapter LXVII – Christmas Part I**

Ginny smiled warmly at Sirius when he stepped into the room. His emotions had been going quite haywire lately and it was really starting to drive her crazy. She couldn't ignore them anymore, or push them aside. They were getting stronger and whenever she was in the same room as him she could feel them pounding through her. She couldn't believe how often other people's emotions affected her now that she had learned to better control her power. They barrelled through her and she could barely manage to sustain her own emotions when they hit her. Now she was feeling a mixture of happiness, fear, sadness, anger, and a bit of anxiety. She knew that this was her chance to try to work it out.

They had all just returned from St. Mungo's a little while ago, where Tonks, Daniel, and Remus were doing wonderfully. The healers had even agreed to let them go home in a few hours since it was Christmas Eve and she figured that the new family was settling down in their new home for the evening. She figured that Lexy must have gone up to bed since Sirius was here alone and Harry was still talking to his parents. But she was awake and the emotions parading through her needed to be dealt with.

"Hey Sirius."

He turned and grinned at her. "Hey Gorgeous, I didn't know that you were here."

She blushed; she couldn't help it. He was always playfully flirting with her and it made her smile. Other than Bill and Charlie, he was the 'brother' that she had missed the most. "Can't really sleep right now. What about you? Why are you down here and not upstairs in bed with your wife?"

Sirius shrugged. "Not tired. I've got some things on my mind anyway."

Ginny nodded and stood up. "I know. Sirius ... look, you understand what I went away to study, right?"

"Yeah, you've got all of these great powers now, brave little, Ginevra, powers of emotions, aren't they?"

"I'm an empath."

"And you want to help me. I get that. But I don't want your help."

Ginny sighed and took a seat next to him on the couch. "Want it or not you're going to get it. Come on, Sirius ... I've thought of you as another big brother, a close friend, or even a godfather. You've always been ... I thought we were kind of close. Don't you think that I've got a good ear?"

"We are close, Ginny, you're a sweetheart and I'm sure that you're a great listener ... but I just don't want to talk about it."

She sighed and took his hands in hers. She was going to make him talk, even if she had to force it out of him. "You feel happy and excited; scared, almost terrified of what the future is going to bring. You're angry at the way you reacted to the news and because of your own past. You love her more than anything and you already love that little girl, which worries you more. How close am I?"

Sirius glared at her. "I think that you should keep your powers the hell out of my head."

"I can't help it. I feel them because you're feeling them so strongly at the moment. I tried to ignore them and push them away but you haven't let me! Now tell me what's wrong, Sirius!"

He sighed. "Why?"

"Because you need to talk to someone before you explode. If not me, then talk to James or Remus or Lexy. But talk to someone." She replied.

Sirius' eyes met hers. "I wouldn't even know where to start."

She smiled and placed her hand on his arm. "How about with the baby?"

He sighed and closed his eyes. "I love her. I know that. Does that count for something?"

"It counts for the world. Now come on, tell me what's wrong?"

"I'm wrong. I don't deserve Lexy or this baby, but I want and love them so much that it hurts. I'm not good for either of them. Look at what I came from and look at my past; it only further proves my point." He replied, dragging his fingers through his hair.

Ginny shook her head. "I don't think so. I don't understand what you're saying, what's your past, Sirius? A convicted murderer of a crime that you didn't even commit? Ooh, real dark and dodgy there."

He grinned. "Okay, point taken. And it's not that part ... it's ... I didn't have the greatest childhood."

"So?"

"So, my parents were not exactly parents of the year. My father was ... I'm sure that you've heard of him, Orion Black. He was a right bastard. Rich as hell, pureblood, and proud of it. In fact, he had a lot in common with Lucius Malfoy, that same attitude of superiority above everyone else. He thought that he was king of the world. He walked over everyone in the ministry by showing that flash of gold, flying his

name around like he was Merlin himself; like he was a gift to the world. But all he was ... he was a drunk, an abusive drunk. He drank a lot, mostly Firewhiskey and gin and tonic. He couldn't hold his liquor very well though and he made it clear of that. He married my mum when he was seventeen, Walburga Black, it was arranged naturally. He had to keep the pureblood line pure. He always said that he started drinking the night of their marriage; that my mother drove him to drink. He had two sons, pureblood, and we were supposed to be exactly like he wanted. Tough, hard, marry a pureblood and give birth to pureblood sons ... I failed from the get-go. I liked to prank and have fun, my brother did too until he saw the consequences. This isn't a pity-me story, my childhood turned out to be quite good after I met James, but before that, yeah, I had the shit beat out of me on a regular basis. My mum, well, she was a right controlling bitch basically, but as you've seen the picture in Grimmauld Place you know that already. She was a hard woman, I could never do anything right in her eyes and she let me know it as did my father. Regulus ... well Reg couldn't make the cut either until he was sorted into Slytherin. I was already practically disowned by that time for getting into Gryffindor. See my problem?"

Ginny shook her head and took his hand in hers again. "No I don't. You're parents were horrible people, Sirius, I get that. But what does that have to do with you?"

"My parents were normal people until they got married, Gorgeous."

"So?"

He rolled his eyes. "So what if I turn out exactly like them? What if when this baby is born I turn to drinking so that I don't have to deal with it? What if I become my parents?"

"That's the most ridiculous thing that I've ever heard."

"Excuse me?"

Ginny nodded. "You heard me. Why would you turn out like them? You're nothing like them, Sirius. You've made yourself into someone so much better than them. You're going to be a wonderful father. You

don't have anything to worry about."

"Sure I do. What about when she grows up and finds out that her daddy spent twelve years in prison? Then what? I lose her?"

Ginny snapped her fingers in front of his eyes causing him to jolt. "Snap out of the fear! You're being ridiculous, Sirius! Kids know that their parents aren't perfect. Besides, it was a crime that you didn't commit. You were innocent."

He nodded. "That may be, but prison changes you, Ginny ... it was a dark place. I don't know what I would have done if James, Harry, and Remus hadn't accepted me back like that. Being there with the Dementors, meals once a day, no showers or baths ... reliving your worse memories day after day. Sometimes I still wake up in a cold sweat with Lex wrapped around me and I feel like I'm still there. That I never got out and that James and Lily are dead and it's my fault. I don't know if I'll ever get over that."

"I don't think that you're supposed to, get over it, I mean." Ginny replied softly. "You may have been an innocent man but you still suffered, Sirius. Prison didn't change you so much. Not where it matters. You're still a wonderful man, handsome and fun and loving and your daughter is going to know that and love that about you. She's going to be your little princess."

Sirius grinned. "Kind of like you're Arthur's?"

Ginny grinned. "Exactly. I'm sure everyone would be nervous to have a baby, Sirius, it's a big step, but I think that you're worrying about nothing."

He sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. "I suppose I am. But to me, this is a big thing. It's my life. Lexy is my life and now this baby ... I'm going to have a daughter."

Ginny laughed. "A beautiful little girl that will snuggle in your lap and love it when you rub her with your rough stubble face first thing in the morning; love it when you sit by her bed at night and tell her fairy tales and stories about the Marauders; love it when you dance with



her or teach her how to play Quidditch; love you more than anything in the world and build you up in her mind as the most wonderful and most amazing man. She will be your princess, Sirius, and she'll love you. You're going to be her hero."

"But I'm not perfect and what happens when she grows up and realizes that? And then she won't want anything to do with me and then what?"

Ginny laughed. "Sirius! No one's perfect."

"But she won't know that and when she realizes that I'm not she's going to hate me and want nothing to do with me and think that I'm a horrible father and ignore me and disown me and then she's going to \_"

"Sirius! Calm down!" She interrupted. "When the time comes for her to realize that you're not perfect, she's going to be growing up. I know my daddy isn't perfect but he's perfect to me. He was my everything when I was little, and he still is. I had big brothers to watch out for me and protect me when I needed them but I didn't need them like I needed my daddy. Now I think that you're letting your mind play tricks on you."

He grinned. "Maybe a little. I'm just scared and nervous ... I've never had a baby before."

"Good thing Lexy's having the baby then and not you."

"Haha, very funny ... I just ... I want to do it right."

"Then snap out of this before I bat bogey you!"

He laughed. "Going to curse me, Gin?"

"I might just hit you and see if you hit back."

His eyes darkened. "I'm not going to hit you."

"Then why would you hit your little girl? Or Lexy?"

“Point taken.” He reached over to ruffle her hair. “But if I did fight, I could take you.”

Ginny laughed. “Pul-lease! I could so kick your arse!”

“Want to test that, Gorgeous?”

She stood up and raised her fists, a smirk on her face. “Alright, let’s go!”

“What’s this?” Harry asked from the doorway. “I come down and find you two about to fist fight? And no offence, Uncle Sirius, but Gin would kick your arse!”

“Hey!”

Ginny laughed and reached up to kiss his cheek. “Love you too. Now go upstairs and tell your wife what you’re feeling. You’ll probably find that she has a lot of the same fears.”

He nodded and stood up. “Ginny?”

“Yeah?”

He pulled her close for a hug and leaned down to whisper in her ear. “Thanks. I love you and I think of you as my goddaughter ... I just wanted you to know that.”

She smiled, tears in her eyes. “Thank you.” She watched him walk away and sighed in contentment when Harry’s arms encircled her waist. “What are you doing down here anyway?”

“Nothing much. Mum and Da went to bed and I couldn’t sleep. What was that about between you and Uncle Sirius?”

Ginny smiled and turned in his arms to wrap her arms around his waist. “I was just helping him out a bit. I think he really needed someone to talk to.”

“And you were that person?”

“Hey! I happen to be a fantastic listener, besides ... I’ve always kind of felt close to Sirius.”

Harry nodded. “I know. You two have a bond of a sort ... right from the beginning. Did he really open up to you?”

She nodded. “He did. I think that it was the most serious conversation that I’ve ever had with him. He’s going through a lot now too.”

“I can imagine. I can’t believe Aunt Lexy’s having a baby too, that’s crazy. Everything is just going so well and so wonderful. I’m kind of afraid that I’ll wake up soon, you know?”

“Yeah, I know what you mean.” Ginny replied. “Tom is still out there but we’ve heard nothing, it’s almost as if he’s biding his time.”

“Exactly.”

Ginny smiled. “Well, for now we don’t need to worry about that. Kiss me goodnight?”

“Goodnight,” he groaned. “But I was hoping that we could stay down here and you know ... have some time alone?”

“Mmm, sounds wonderful ... but I’m tired and I know you are too. I’ll make it up to you tomorrow. After all, tomorrow’s Christmas.” She kissed him softly. “Promise.”

He nodded. “I can live with that. Come on, I’ll walk you upstairs.”

“Why thank you, Mr. Potter!”

He grinned and kissed her again. “You are very welcome.”

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Sirius stepped into the bedroom, closing the door behind him. Lexy rolled over at the sound but she didn’t wake up. He undressed silently

and then slipped into bed next to her, snuggling her close. His head rested on her stomach. He rubbed his hand gently over her tummy through the blue silk of her nightgown, looking up at his wife for a minute to make sure that she was sleeping before he turned his attention back to her flat abdomen.

“Hey princess ... it’s your dad talking to you right now. I know I’ve never done that before. I uh ... well, I don’t even know if you can hear me, but I hope so. I just wanted to tell you that I love you so much. I love you more than anything in the world and I’m going to take the best possible care of you.” He kissed Lexy’s stomach, oblivious to Lexy’s slow smile that appeared on her face. “I’m going to teach you a lot too, about the Marauders ... you’ll be a real good Marauder and if you’re not well that’s okay too and I’ll tell you lots of stories about things me and your uncles James and Remus did.”

He jolted when hands slid through his hair. “She loves you too.”

“Huh?”

Lexy smiled and pulled him up so that she could kiss him. “She loves you too. You’re going to be a great father, Sirius.”

He nodded. “I just ... I just had a bit of heart to heart with Ginny.”

“Oh yeah? Did you learn anything?”

“A bit yeah.” He replied. “I learned that I’m proud of her and that I love her like a goddaughter. She’s amazing and I really opened up to her, more than I think I wanted to. She was right about one thing though, I did need to talk to someone. I needed to get it off my chest, my worries and my concerns. I’ve had a lot on my mind lately.”

“Like what?”

“My parents, my childhood, prison ... I was just thinking, what if I turned out to be like my parents were or how our baby will react when she finds out that I was in prison.”

“And what did Ginny say about that?” Lexy asked, running her fingers

softly through his hair as his head rested on her breasts listening to her heartbeat.

“She told me to snap out of it; threatened to bat bogey me and to hit me.”

Lexy laughed. “Did you?”

“Did I what?” He asked, lifting his head to look into her eyes.

“Snap out of it.”

He grinned. “I think so. I’m still going to be worried, I mean; I don’t know anything about being a father.”

“Yes, you do. You know exactly how to be a father because you’ve had a role model in James. You’re Harry’s godfather and you may not have been around for most of his life but you were there when he was a baby. You’re going to do fine. Maybe I don’t know anything about being a mother.”

Sirius grinned. “You’re amazing and I don’t have any doubt in your abilities.”

Lexy smiled. “Neither do I and that applies to you as well. Do you feel better now?”

He nodded. “Much. I was wondering about something though?”

“Hmm, what’s that?”

“Well, godparents for our baby.”

Lexy looked over at him in surprise. “You have been thinking a bit, haven’t you?”

He nodded. “Well, Moony asked you and Harry to be godparents to Dan and, well, Petunia and I are godparents to Harry but she doesn’t count and, well, I was wondering if you had anyone particular in mind for godparents?”

She shook her head. "Not really, why who were you thinking?"

"Lex, I really want Ginny to be godmother."

Lexy smiled. "I knew that you were going to say that."

"Is that a good thing?"

She laughed. "Yes. I think Ginny would be perfect. I think that you should be the one to ask her though. Alright? It would mean more to her and to you."

He nodded. "I can do that."

"Hmm, and I don't even have to ask who's godfather do I?"

Sirius grinned. "Well, it's only right; I mean I am godfather to his firstborn."

Lexy laughed and kissed him softly. "James and Ginny it is, Sirius, but I get to choose for the next one."

"Next one?" Sirius asked paling. "Oh boy, I'm not even used to the idea of one yet!"

She grinned. "You'll get used to it."

"So what are we going to name her?"

"Hmm?" She asked.

"Our daughter? What are we going to name her?"

Lexy grinned. "I don't know. I haven't really thought about it. Any ideas?"

He grinned wickedly. "A few. What about ... Agnes or Priscilla or maybe Babette?"

Lexy's eyebrow rose questionably. "I don't think so. We'll work on the whole name thing and definitely not Babette."

Sirius laughed. "Come on, Babette Black, I think it has a nice sound to it."

"No."

"What, don't I get a choice in the names? Okay what about Babs? Or Beatrice?"

Lexy grinned. "Hmm, I really don't think so."

"Berniece Black or Bluebelle or Buffy ... Bunny ... oh I got it! Bunty Black!"

Lexy laughed. "This conversation is over, Mr. Black. We are not naming our daughter Bunty."

"Okay, what about Clementine or Coco or maybe Dolores ... no too Umbitch ... um Dixie or maybe Dotty, Earleen, Effie or Edna um ... Fanny, Flicka, Imogene, Kitty, no what about Lottie or Josephine or Olivette, Pauline, Philippina, Tibby, Winnie, no I got it ... Yolanda."

"No, no, no, and no. Where are you even coming up with these names?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. Come on though, Olivette Black ... it has a ring to it."

"No."

"You're not even listening to me." He whined.

Lexy smiled and kissed him softly. "Honey, if you want our daughter to love you, you cannot name her Flicka or Babs or Olivette or Bunty. Got it?"

He sighed. "Alright, we'll think of something better. You really don't like Bluebelle?"

“Sirius!”

He grinned. “Just kidding. Besides, it’s not like we don’t have any time to choose one.”

She nodded and ran her fingers through his hair. “Exactly. Sirius?”

“Yeah?”

“I love you.”

A slow smile formed on his face and he kissed her hand. “I love you too, Lex.” Then he kissed her belly through her nightgown. “And I love you too, princess. Don’t worry; Mummy’s not going to let me name you Bunty.”

Lexy laughed. “You’re hopeless.”

“Am not. Okay so what about Eugenia?”

“No. I’m going to sleep now.”

“Ah, you’re no fun.” He kissed her softly. “Night.”

Lexy smiled at him and then snuggled close. “Goodnight.”

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Harry woke up early on Christmas morning and stumbled into the bathroom. He still felt like his life for the past few days had all been a dream. He was a godfather to a handsome baby boy; his mum was alive and happy; and Ginny was back in his arms. His life was just becoming too wonderful and he hated himself for waiting for the other shoe to drop. He showered and dressed for the day and grinned when he opened his bedroom door and found Ginny about to knock.

Her hair was pulled back halfway, leaving most of it hanging down her back. Her hair was even more gorgeous now with the layers and the pretty highlights of gold and dark red, something her hair held



naturally on its own which only made it look greater. She wore tight jeans that showed the outline of her hips and her legs enough to make Harry's mouth water and she had on an emerald green sweater that left her shoulders bare and was form fitting in all of the right places.

"Happy Christmas!"

He grinned and yanked her forward, kissing her softly on the lips. "Mmm, happy Christmas indeed."

She laughed. "Come on; let's go downstairs and open presents."

"Who says that you got any gifts?"

"I do." She held his hand in hers as she led him down the stairs. They ran into Draco on the way down. "Happy Christmas!"

Draco nodded. "Yeah, you too."

Harry grinned. "Would it kill you to smile? It is Christmas."

Draco grinned. "I guess not."

The three of them stepped into the living room where the huge Christmas tree was standing. James had gone all out this year with the tree and Harry knew that it was because it was the first Christmas that he was home since he had started at school. The tree was beautiful, decked out in white and gold fairy lights with bubbles sitting atop the branches. Decorations outlined the tree too from ornaments he had made as a child to expensive glass ones. To him it was the perfect tree.

Almost everyone was settled in the living room at this point. Fleur was curled up comfortably in Bill's lap in one of the huge armchairs; Fred and George were seated on the floor next to the tree; Ron was sitting on the couch next to Sirius, who had Lexy in his lap; Hermione was sitting next to Charlie and Emma; and Molly and Arthur were holding hands from where they sat on the couch. Harry took a seat on the floor and Ginny made herself comfortable on his lap as Draco sat

down next to them. It was only a few minutes later when Remus, Tonks, Daniel, James, and Lily stepped into the room.

“Happy Christmas everyone!” James grinned happily as he took a seat.

Molly smiled up at him. “Happy Christmas, James! The tree looks even lovelier then it did last night.”

Lily smiled. “I have to agree.”

A few moments later, presents were being passed around and the room was filled with the sounds of ripping paper. Harry was more interested in watching everyone open their gifts than in seeing what he got. But he received some new clothes from Molly and Arthur, sweaters she had sewn him; some new products from the twins; Hermione had bought him refills of ingredients from his broomstick servicing kit; Draco had given him a book on defence from dark magic which surprised him greatly but he was pleased all the same; Ron had given him some Pride of Portree memorabilia which had surprised him as he usually got Canons stuff; Sirius and Lexy had given him a collection of books about ancient magic that touched upon every subject imaginable and caused Hermione to ooh in pleasure; Remus and Tonks had given him a framed photograph of him holding Daniel as well as some new novels; James had given him some new clothing and a picture of James, Harry, and Lily at St. Mungo’s from the night Dan was born; Charlie had given him some dragon hide boots which he had helped make; and from Bill and Fleur he had received some neat stuff from Egypt. But Ginny’s gift had been the best.

She had given him a new sweater, a picture of herself taken in Hawaii, and a whispered promise that she had something else for him later on. His gift to her was ... well, he hadn’t forgotten about the promise he made to himself in the summer, so she received a portable stereo system and a wide collection of music varying from muggle artists to witches and wizards from classical to rock to country. She giggled in awe when she saw it and Harry grinned when he saw the look on Arthur’s face. He wondered who was going to have more fun with it.

Draco was the most interesting to watch as he couldn't seem to believe that he was getting presents. Everyone there had bought him something and even though he didn't receive any gifts from his own family, he still seemed pleased. James and Harry had given him the room upstairs in the manor where he had stayed in the summer with the promise that he could live there with them as long as he wanted. James had also gotten him a few new pairs of clothes. He looked truly surprised and touched by it.

"Here, Draco, I've got one more gift for you." James replied as he held out an envelope to him. Draco looked at him in curiosity as he accepted it. He carefully opened it up and slipped the parchment out. "It's not much," James continued. "I just thought that it was worth saving as a Christmas gift."

Draco stared at the parchment in front of him in shock for a moment and then he looked up. "I don't ... this says that I don't have to marry Pansy."

James grinned. "According to the betrothment contract made, no. It wasn't a blood bond or a chastity bond though it is recorded here that Lucius Malfoy tried to insist on both. Roger Parkinson disagreed and only allowed the betrothment on the grounds that it was signed and a sum of money given out. They both signed it for that agreement only."

"What does that mean exactly? I mean, it still says that I have to marry her?" He replied.

James nodded. "It does yes, but there's a way for you to get out of it because it was only a signed contract and payment not a blood or chastity bond. It means that you are betrothed to Pansy and as it is stated in the contract that you must marry her on 9th July, 1998, unless you manage to find someone else before that."

"Someone else?" Draco asked.

James nodded. "If you find another woman, someone you love and would rather marry, then you must either marry her before the set date written in the contract or sign another marriage contract within the Ministry promising to marry that woman no more than two years

later and then a blood bond would be made between the two of you if you postpone the wedding to a later date. By doing so, you would be free of Pansy.”

Harry grinned at the look on Draco’s face. “Draco, that’s great! Now you can work your charm on trying to get Delilah to like you.”

“Delilah?” James asked. “Who’s Delilah? Is she pretty?”

“Very. She’s this beautiful girl in fifth year that Draco hasn’t been able to keep his eyes off of since school started.” Harry replied as he grinned at the look of awe on Draco’s face. “But she won’t give him the time of day.”

Draco glared at Harry. “Thanks, just tell everyone.” He sighed. “It doesn’t matter anyway, she hates me. I doubt that that’s about to change anytime soon.”

Lily smiled warmly at him. “Now Draco, I’m sure that she could have a change of heart. Just look at James and I. If you ask anyone, I thought James was a self-centered, egotistical prat that I couldn’t even stand to be in the same room with. I ended up marrying him.”

Draco grinned. “Well, she does think that, but that’s not the reason she hates me. If it was that, I could work around it.”

“What is it then?” Lily asked. “If you don’t mind me asking.”

Draco was silent for a moment as he looked around the huge room full of people. He felt safe here and he felt surprisingly comfortable talking about this with people he didn’t even know that well. But there were some things that were still too private. He stood up, with every intention of leaving until Lily spoke again.

“Come on, Draco; why does she hate you?”

Before he could stop himself, he blurted it out. “Because my father raped and killed her mother. Excuse me.” He turned and walked out of the room without another word.

The room stayed silent after he left. Harry looked at his parents then. "I knew there was something there. I've been trying to get him to trust me since August. I'm going to go talk to him."

Lily placed her hand on her son's shoulder. "No, I am."

Harry watched her leave and sighed. "I hope that she can help him."

James smiled. "If anyone can get him to talk about his past it will be Lily."

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Lily headed upstairs into the room where Draco was staying and knocked softly on the door.

"Go away."

Lily ignored him and stepped inside of the room, closing the door behind her. "No, I don't think I will."

He looked up at her in surprise. "Er, well of course you can come in, I mean it is your, well ... I thought you were Potter, I mean Harry."

She smiled and took a seat in the armchair next to his bed. "I know. Listen Draco, we haven't really gotten a chance to talk. Mind you, I only did just arrive here but I don't know much about you except for the fact that you're the son of Lucius and Narcissa and that you came to my son for help when Voldemort tried to force you into following him. Before that I understand that you and Harry didn't get along so well."

Draco nodded. "Yeah, well, he ... Potter pissed me off a bit."

"Why?"

"Why do you care?"

Lily shrugged. "Who said I cared? Maybe I'm just curious. You said something downstairs that was pretty serious about your father and

I'd like to know not only where that came from but a little more about you. Especially since you'll be living here for the next while."

He sighed. "I ... I didn't like Potter because he insulted me on the first train ride to school. I was in awe of him like any other kid who had grown up hearing about his story, but unlike my parents who told me that he was evil as he had defeated the so called *great* lord, I viewed him as a hero like the rest of the world. Well, I heard he was on the train and I was excited but when I went into his compartment he was sitting in there with Ron. I recognized him right away as a Weasley, a group of people that I had been taught to be blood traitors, people not worthy to know. Something I regret believing now without discovering for myself. Mr. and Mrs. Weasley have been nothing but kind to me since I arrived."

Lily nodded. "I understand that they're very kind people. Go on."

"Well, anyway I told him that I could help him out, help him learn to make friends with the right sort of people. He gave me a dirty look and said he could tell the right sort of himself. It was a direct insult to me but now that I look back on it, I can't say I blame him as I did insult his friend. We've kind of been enemies ever since. I mean, nothing really bad ever came of it. We just didn't like each other. But when I was told that I had to become a Death Eater or die he was the only person that I could think of to go to for help. I was afraid that if I went to Dumbledore ... Father would know and I would only get myself in more trouble." Draco explained.

"And Delilah? Where does she fit in?" Lily asked.

"She's beautiful. I really like her I don't know ... she's smart and pretty and she has a great laugh. But when I was eight I snuck downstairs during one of my father's 'meetings', Mother told me not to and that it wasn't appropriate for a child of my age ... she knew what they were doing, I know that now. There were five of them down there and Miriam Knight, Delilah's mother, she was chained to the wall and naked. They beat her and raped her, all of them. I hid in a hole in the wall and watched, crying and not understanding what they were doing. They all left and I thought for sure now that my father was alone with her he would save her. He raped her again and then he killed her;

right there in front of me. He didn't know that I was there, of course ... Delilah and her dad know that it was my father who had her but as my father can squirm his way out of everything, they've got no proof." He replied. "He always gets away with it and he always gets out of prison, so there's no point in anything. Delilah thinks ... she says I'm just like him and that she wants nothing to do with me."

Lily stood up and took a seat on the bed next to him and gently ran her fingers through his hair. He stiffened at first and then he moved closer to her and allowed her to pull him into her arms and cuddle him to her breast. She smelt like a mum, he thought, or the way a mum should smell. "Its okay, sweetheart," she murmured as she continued to stroke his hair. After a few moments he sat up, looking a bit embarrassed. Lily ignored the look and took his hand in hers. "You're a very brave young man. You stood up to your parents by leaving and seeking help because you didn't want to get caught up in something that you know is wrong. You're not the one who committed the crime and once Delilah gets past that, she'll see who you really are. You just have to give her time, work on getting under her skin a little bit. Let her see the real you. Harry and James have a lot of faith in you and they really seem to believe that you've changed for the better. If they hadn't then they would never have allowed for you to stay here in our home. Do you understand that?"

He nodded. "I'm grateful to them, Mrs. Potter, don't think that I'm not."

"It's Lily and I know you are. But there's something that you're not doing; something that Harry talked to me about. You're not opening yourself up, allowing them to befriend you. You've obviously had a terrible past, Draco. You witnessed a murder and I doubt that that was the only thing you ever saw, am I right?"

He nodded but he didn't meet her gaze. "Yes."

"I won't force you to tell me these things but you should tell Harry. Now I may be prejudiced as he is my son, but he's a wonderful young man. He's a lot like James in two ways. He's trustworthy and he really listens to people when they talk. The second thing is that he's loyal. Harry would never betray someone he cares about; he would die first." Lily replied. "You trusted him enough with your life. You came to

him for help when you needed it, but you won't let him help when it matters the most."

"I don't need any help now." Draco replied.

Lily smiled and touched his cheek. "You need a friend. You need someone that you can talk to. Harry's that person, Draco. He can help you out quite a bit but it's your job to let him in."

"Why are you telling me this?" Draco asked. "You don't even know me."

"I know enough about you to know that you're a sweet young man and that your heart's in the right place. We just need your mind to try and catch up with it." She leaned over and kissed his cheek. "Now come on downstairs and enjoy Christmas with us. The more the merrier right?"

He nodded. "Mrs. Pot – Lily?"

"Yes."

"I just wanted to tell you that I grew up believing all muggleborns were bad but you and Hermione have really proved me wrong in these last few months. I just wanted to apologize for what I believed before."

Lily smiled. "There's no need. The thoughts didn't come from you."

Draco watched her leave the room and he sighed. *How had he ended up being so lucky?* Everyone was so nice to him and he had no idea of how to repay them. All he knew was that he felt like a small weight had been lifted off of his chest in a way that writing his thoughts out had never helped him. Lily was right; he needed a friend and Harry had been there for him. Now it was time for Draco to lean on the shoulder that was offered.

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## Chapter 68: Christmas Part II

**Author's Notes:** this chapter is intense - remember it is rated R - plz review and i dont own the lyrics

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### Chapter LXVIII – Christmas Part II

Ginny stood in the kitchen with Molly helping her mum finish the desserts that she had made. Maddy and Mickey had naturally allowed Molly to help with dinner, but they did insist on making most of it. Molly had been a little limited as to what she could do in the kitchen. All of the presents had been opened by now and Draco had come back downstairs. The common room was filled with laughter and games. Ginny had offered to help Molly do the last minute finishing touches on the desserts she had made. It was after all, a bit of a tradition between the two of them.

“Ginny, dear, can you get the sugar candy sprinkles down from the cupboard up there.” Molly asked as she pointed up at the high cupboard.

“I can use magic to get it, Mum. I can do wandless magic now, you know?”

“No. Magic isn’t to be used for everything, Ginny.” Molly replied, not even looking over at her daughter.

Ginny nodded and dragged a chair over to stand on. When she reached up her jumper rose up a bit, showing off her bare stomach and she heard her mother gasp. She glanced over at her mum in concern. “Mum, what is it? Are you alright?”

Molly’s face was turning red now and Ginny closed her eyes, suddenly realizing exactly what had happened. She tugged the hem of her jumper down and tried to look innocent as she climbed down from the chair. “GINEVRA MOLLY WEASLEY, JUST WHAT EXACTLY IS THAT IN YOUR NAVAL?”

Ginny blushed and her hand automatically went to fiddle with the

dangling silver G. "Well, Mum ... you see ... it goes like ... hmm."

"GINEVRA! YOU GOT YOUR BELLYBUTTON PIERCED?"

Ginny sighed. "Kind of?"

"WHAT ON EARTH WERE YOU THINKING?"

Lily stepped into the kitchen with Emma. "Hey, we heard some yelling is everything alright?"

Ginny glanced at Emma. "Mum found it."

Molly's eyes flicked to Emma's. "YOU! YOU ALLOWED HER TO GET THAT ... THAT THING PIERCED INTO HER LIKE THAT! A BELLYBUTTON RING? I MEAN, HONESTLY! THAT IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR A YOUNG LADY!"

Emma laughed. "Not appropriate? It's just a ring, Mrs. Weasley and can be taken out at any given time. Besides I bet Harry likes it."

Ginny blushed deeper and then groaned at her mum's face. "HARRY HAS SEEN THAT? GINEVRA! JUST WHAT EXACTLY HAVE YOU BEEN DOING WITH THAT BOY?"

"Mum! Honestly, it's my body! I wanted to get one and Emma let me! Alright, there's nothing that you can do about it!"

"OH, THERE'S NOTHING THAT I CAN DO ABOUT IT, EH? I'M YOUR MOTHER, DON'T I GET A SAY IN THIS?"

"NO! It's my body, Mum! Why do you object to it anyway? It's no different then having my ears pierced?"

"Because it's on your body! It's not ... it makes you look like ... a harlot!" Molly exclaimed.

"A harlot? And what about the way that you always react to Bill's long hair or his earring? And Charlie has a tattoo of a dragon on his back! It's always, oh dear, why did you do this? Let me trim it for you or

take it out or make it disappear. But I get my bellybutton pierced and I'm a harlot?"

Lily stepped between them. "Now, you didn't mean that, Molly. Ginny is your daughter and you know that she's not a harlot. Ginny, I think that the bellybutton ring looks very nice on you. It's attractive and I know for a fact that my son likes it as he told me. Molly, Ginny is almost a grown woman and it is her decision, now maybe she should have run the idea by you first, but she didn't. Now come on, it's Christmas."

Molly sighed. "You're right, Lily. Ginny, I'm sorry ... but I still don't like it."

Ginny laughed and kissed her mum's cheek. "It's okay, Mum. I'm sorry too for not telling you."

"Now you don't have any other hidden surprises do you?" Molly asked.

Ginny's eyes met Emma's as she thought about the tattoo. "No, of course not."

Molly smiled. "Good. Now why don't you take out the treacle tart? I made extra this year as I know James and Harry devour it just as much as my boys do. It's a little frozen and needs time to thaw before dinner."

Ginny nodded and grinned at Emma. "Sure, Mum."

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Harry rolled his eyes at Draco in the common room when Ron and Hermione started to bicker over a move that Bill had made in the game of chess that he was playing against Charlie. "I'm giving up."

Draco laughed. "You definitely lost the bet anyway. Those two are never going to happen!"

"What bet?" Sirius asked as he took a seat on the couch next to Harry.

“Can I get into a bet?”

Harry grinned. “If you want to waste twenty galleons.”

Draco laughed. “Seamus started a bet about how long it would take the two of them to get together. Potter here said before Christmas, I’m thinking he lost.”

Sirius grinned. “Excellent! I’m in! Just give me a few minutes to talk to the masterminds over there.” He stood up and went over to talk to Fred and George.

Harry looked over at Draco. “Oh boy, they’re going to plan something and we’re going to be in big trouble.”

“Trouble? Why?”

“Uncle Sirius is going to convince them to do something crazy to get them together and ... well, never mind, it should be entertaining.”

Draco nodded. “Now that I can agree with.” He nodded towards the doorway. “You’re other half has returned.”

Harry stuck his tongue out at him and grinned up at Ginny as she snuggled herself down into his lap. “Hey, what was all the yelling about coming from the kitchen?”

“Mum found it.” Ginny replied.

“Found what?”

“My bellybutton ring. She wasn’t exactly too pleased about it.” Ginny explained. “But Lily and Emma stepped in and I think it’s all worked out now.”

“That’s good then. Draco and I are watching Uncle Sirius and the twins as we’ve added a new participant to the bet.”

“Bet?” Ginny asked and then she grinned. “Oh, well it should be entertaining.”

Harry grinned. "I said the same thing."

Sirius walked over and took a seat next to them again. "Alright, all is set now."

Harry grinned. "You never did mention how long you thought it would take?"

Sirius grinned. "Midnight."

Harry laughed. "Optimistic are you?"

Sirius shrugged. "Midnight tonight at the absolute latest."

As if on cue there was an explosion that came from Ron. He suddenly was wearing an elf hat with pointy ears and a tee shirt that said: *I Love Hermione*. Harry watched as Fred pointed his wand at Ron again and Ron fell to his knees in front of Hermione and began to yell loudly.

*"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine! You make me happy, when skies are grey! You'll never know dear, how much I love you! So please don't take my sunshine away!"*

Hermione blushed madly as Ron stood up and began to do a tap dance routine as he continued to sing. George let out a small cough and pointed his wand at Hermione. She was suddenly dancing with Ron and singing just as loudly. Sirius waved his wand and the spells disappeared just as a giant floating piece of mistletoe arrived over the couple. Hermione noticed it first and blushed.

"Oy, Ron! You got to kiss her now!" Bill shouted.

Charlie nodded. "It's the rules of the land! It's bad luck if you don't."

Ron's ears turned red as he looked at Hermione who continued to blush. Neither one of them said anything but they both looked incredibly embarrassed and angry. Then the floating mistletoe started to sing:

*"We wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas, we wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year!"* Then suddenly the Christmas carol broke off into a Disney classic that made Harry place a hand over his mouth to stifle his laugh as it fit the scene so well!

*Yes, you want her.  
Look at her, you know you do.  
Possible she wants you too,  
There is one way to ask her.  
It don't take a word, not a single word,  
You wanna kiss the girl.*

*Sha-la-la-la-la-la, my oh my, look at the boy too shy,  
He ain't gonna kiss the girl!  
Sha-la-la-la-la-la, ain't that sad?  
Ain't it a shame, too bad, you gonna miss the girl.*

*Now's your moment,  
Sitting in the living room,  
Boy you better do it soon,  
No time will be better,  
She don't say a word  
And she won't say a word until you kiss the girl.*

*Sha-la-la-la-la-la, don't be scared,  
You got the mood prepared,  
Go on and kiss the girl, wow, wow!  
Sha-la-la-la-la-la-la, don't stop now,  
Don't try to hide it now,  
You wanna kiss the girl, wow, wow!*

*Sha-la-la-la-la-la, float along,  
Listen to the song,  
The song say kiss the girl, wow, wow.  
Sha-la-la-la-la-la, music play,  
Do what the music say,  
You wanna kiss the girl.*

*Kiss the girl,  
You wanna kiss the girl  
Kiss the girl!*

George walked over to them and simply shoved Ron into Hermione. They stumbled and fell beneath the Christmas tree. Hermione's breath hitched in her throat at the feel of Ron's body on top of hers. Ron closed his eyes and leaned down closer to her. She reached up as if to push him away but then she grabbed a fistful of his hair and yanked his lips down to hers. She didn't hear the cheer that erupted around the room as she was too shocked at the impact of the kiss.

This was Ron. Her Ron, the Ron that had made her feel funny inside for as long as she could remember. He tasted like chocolates and his lips were soft and yielding. Her tongue darted out to meet his before she could stop herself. She wanted to lap him up and never let go. She had been dreaming of this moment for so long, though she had imagined it differently. Her fingers continued to clutch in his hair and she smiled against his mouth when she felt one of his beautiful large hands grip her hip and the other one brush the hair from her cheek. He was so sweet.

Ron couldn't believe that he was actually kissing Hermione. He had never imagined this moment to come. He wasn't worthy of her. What did he have to offer her? But here she was, pulling him closer as if her life depended on it. He never wanted to let her go. He slid his hand over her hip, wondering how he had known exactly what it would feel like to touch her. He was too involved in her taste to hear the cheering and the talking around them. He moved his hand upwards and when his thumb brushed bare skin he jolted back. He stared down into her eyes; those dark greyish-brown orbs that he knew were guarding the knowledge behind. He gave her a wicked grin at the sight of her tousled hair and the swollen lips.

"Ron," she whispered.

He grinned. "Mione."

"FINALLY!" George exclaimed, breaking the moment for the two of

them.

“That only took a hundred years.” Fred replied.

Harry nodded. “It did take a while. So are you two together then?”

Hermione blushed and pushed herself away from Ron. She glared at Harry before she left the room. Ron stared after her for a minute and then he got up and followed her. Ginny slapped Harry’s arm.

“OW! What was that for?”

Her eyebrow rose slightly. “For being an inconsiderate prat!”

Sirius grinned. “She has a point, Harry. Ow!”

Ginny shrugged. “You were a prat too!”

Sirius grinned. “Maybe I was. But that’s not important. I won the bet, didn’t I?”

Harry nodded. “I’m thinking yes.”

“Then problem solved. Oy, James! Toss me a bottle of butterbeer!”

Ginny rolled her eyes. “Men!”

Lexy patted her gently on the arm as she snuggled herself down into her husband’s lap. “Tell me about it.”

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Ron found Hermione in her room. She was curled up on her side, tears pouring down her cheeks as she sobbed. Her entire body was shaking and he hesitated at the doorway for a moment. Then he changed his mind and stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. She didn’t even look up. He took a seat on the bed and gently ran his hand over her back. She let out another sob but then she sat up and wiped the tears from her eyes.



"I want you to leave me alone, Ron."

"Why?"

"You know why!"

Ron shrugged. "No I don't."

"Well, you should! Damn it, Ron! Look what happened down there!"  
Hermione exclaimed.

"The twins happened and I'm pretty sure that Sirius played a role in there too! Get over it! They pranked us!"

Hermione rolled her eyes. "That's not the point!"

"Then what is the point, Hermione?"

She sighed. "The point ... the point is that we ... we kissed, Ron! Right there in front of everyone! And that was not some random kiss under the mistletoe and don't you dare say it or I will hex you into next week!"

Ron put his hands up in front of him in a sign of peace. "I wasn't going to. The kiss was ... it was some kiss, Hermione."

"Some kiss? That's all you can say! Right there! In front of everyone!"  
She stood up and began to pace the room. "What they must think of me! A harlot or a tart ... am I tart?"

Ron laughed and then stopped at the look on her face. "Hermione, you're not, stop worrying ... we kissed."

She nodded. "Now what?"

Ron looked bewildered. "Now what, what?"

"Argh! Ron, sometimes you're so ... you're such an idiot!" She exclaimed.

Ron stood up and grabbed her arm. "I'm an idiot? What's wrong with you? You're the one who's flipping out over this?"

"I just, I don't know! Why are we even ... this is ridiculous! This entire conversation is ridiculous! I don't think that we should –"

"Hermione, shut up!" Ron exploded angrily.

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me! I'm tired of listening to you ranting and raving and nagging me half to death over stupid little things!"

"Oh, that's rich!" Hermione exclaimed. "You're the one that starts half of these bloody arguments with me and I'm about just on my wits end! I think that you should just – ow!" She shrieked when he yanked her up against him.

"Kiss you? So do I." He crushed his mouth to hers and she went limp in his arms, her hands circling the back of his neck to pull in his hair.

She let out a moan as she melted against him, her lips melding with his. He tasted the same, just like he had downstairs. He smelt the same and he felt the same. This was Ron. Her Ron, the one that she had practically given up hope on. But here he was, taking charge and kissing her senseless until she felt like her brain was going to explode to the sound of her beating heart. She ran her hands down his back and his hands slid down to her hips to pull her closer. She could feel the entire outline of his body against hers. She gasped and deepened the kiss.

Ron felt like he was dreaming. That first kiss downstairs ... it had taken him so long to kiss her because not only was everyone watching but she had looked so beautiful and nervous and he hadn't wanted her to think that he only kissed her because there was mistletoe. He wanted to kiss her for herself. She tasted like peppermint tea and chocolate and she felt like heaven in his arms. He had been dreaming of this moment for most of his life. When she deepened the kiss and allowed entry for his tongue he just groaned and dragged her closer. He never wanted to let her go.

The kiss went on for a few more moments before Ron pulled back, his breathing heavy and his hands trembling as they brushed Hermione's hair away from her face.

"Well?"

Hermione's eyes fell down to his lips. "Why did you stop?"

"What is this, Hermione? Harry asked a good question down there. Are we together or not?"

"What do you want?" She asked softly.

He sighed. "I love you."

"What?"

He nodded. "You heard me. I don't know when it started but I do know that I realized it when I asked you to the Yule Ball and found out that you already had a date."

Hermione laughed. "Merlin, you were so jealous!"

He grinned. "Yeah, well, you're beautiful." He tucked a piece of hair behind her ear. "Hermione ..."

She smiled. "Ron?"

"Will you go out with me?"

She grinned. "Ron, if you think for one second that I would have kissed you the way that I just did and then not go out with you, I'm going to hex you!"

He laughed. "Alright. Can I kiss you?"

She nodded and stood on her toes to kiss him softly. "Ron?"

"Hmm?"

"I love you too." Then she wrapped her arms around his neck and lost herself in his lips.

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Harry grinned broadly when he saw Ron and Hermione return to the common room walking hand in hand. The twins noticed next and cheered and soon everyone was congratulating them for 'finally' getting together. They blushed a bit but mostly just smiled before sitting in a corner somewhere and snogging. Sirius was pleased and kept reminding everyone that he had won the bet. After about the fourth time he declared this, Lexy grabbed a fistful of his hair and yanked his mouth to hers. It certainly worked in the shutting him up department and caused the twins to whistle loudly.

Harry spent the rest of the day wondering exactly what this present from Ginny was. She was being very secretive about it and it was starting to drive him crazy. She was driving him crazy just as much too because she was never quite there. One minute she would be snuggling comfortably in his lap and running her hands along his or in his hair and then she would be gone, helping her mum in the kitchen or something of that nature. He just wanted to hold her and never let go. But between the manor so full of people, trying to spend Christmas together, dodging the twins who had a new product that they were trying to test out, and spend some time with his mum; spending time with Ginny seemed impossible.

But finally, after a long day of trying to get her alone, the house went up to bed. Ron and Hermione were still sitting in the common room talking when Ginny held her hand out to Harry.

"Come on; we need to talk and I need to give you the rest of your present."

Harry nodded and took her hand in his, following her out of the room. She pulled him into her bedroom and closed the door before placing a silencing charm and a locking charm on the room.

He grinned. "Guess your powers did improve."

She laughed. "You're not the only one who can do wandless magic, mister."

He grinned and took a step towards her, slipping his fingers into her hair to cup her face. "I'm alright with that." Then he dipped his head to capture her lips.

Ginny moaned and wrapped her arms around his neck. She smiled when he scooped her up into his arms and carried her over to the couch that was in the room, laying her down and positioning himself over her before he deepened the kiss. Fireworks went off in her brain as she pulled him closer, desperate for the taste and the touch of his lips and hands. She had missed him so much, almost painfully and she had been home for two days now and neither one of them had really gotten some time alone.

Harry's lips moved away from hers over to her right ear. He nibbled gently there for a while until he felt her tremble and then he followed the column of her throat. Her skin was soft and creamy and it held a glow that had always been there but now was brighter and more powerful than before. He knew it had to do with magic and with everything that she had learned. When he reached the end of her throat he let his eyes travel down the bare skin that was left showing and the rise and fall of her breasts. His heart pounded when his eyes met hers again.

"You're so beautiful. I never thought you could ... you're amazing." He whispered.

She smiled and pulled his mouth down to hers. His hands were still in her hair as their lips met and when one hand moved down to play with the hem of her jumper the anticipation came soaring through her body so quickly that she gasped.

Harry lifted his head to look down at her. "Gin?"

She shook her head. "I'm alright. Harry?"

"Yes?" He asked as he slowly began to inch her jumper up.

"We really need to talk."

He nodded and leaned down to kiss her stomach before he sighed and sat up. "Alright, let's talk."

She sat up and curled herself into his lap so that she was straddling him. "We need to talk about me."

"I know. We've started to, but we've never really seemed to take the full extent, right?"

"Yeah, I suppose so." She ran her fingers through her hair. "I don't even know where to start."

He grinned and kissed her cheek. "From the beginning."

Ginny laughed. "I guess that's a good place. Do you remember a few days ago when you first saw me since I came back?"

He groaned. "Gin, I am never going to forget that moment for as long as I live. In fact I am placing it in my *Book of Memories*."

She grinned. "Alright, well do you remember how intense our kiss was and how I told you that I couldn't breathe, that I felt like I was on fire and it all had to do with my senses magnifying?"

He nodded. "Yeah."

"You need to fully understand my powers, Harry. It's important, not only to me, but to us and for us to be together."

Harry nodded. "Then tell me. I want to understand."

Ginny smiled and kissed him softly. "What did you feel just now in that kiss?"

"Incredible. I felt those soft lush lips that drive me crazy and an ache because it ended so quickly. I felt your love for me. Does that make sense or is it corny?"

She laughed. "It was kind of corny but that's what I was looking for. When I kiss you like that, Harry, or even just sitting on your lap like this I feel so much. I'm drawn to you in ways that I'm not to anyone else. When I kiss you I feel your lips and your hands and your heart but it's the reaction that my body takes that is the problem."

"You once said that you were afraid that you would seduce me?" He replied with a grin.

Ginny laughed. "With good reason. My body is on fire whenever I get the slightest contact with you. It's like a slow burn that works its way through and leaves me aching for something that I'm not quite ready for. I feel so much of what you feel when I'm kissing you."

"You feel my emotions too?"

"Yes I do because we're so close and we've ... I'm connected to you. I can communicate with you telepathically and that makes us stronger because you're the only person I've managed to contact who has been able to answer back. That has to do with your powers. I'm not explaining this very well." She moaned, burying her face in his shoulder.

He grinned. "Yes, you are. I get it. You're more powerful with me because of a connection we share and because we're so in love with each other that we can't think straight. I get that, but what I'm not understanding is this senses magnified thing. So you feel more than I do?"

She shook her head. "Not really, it's like whatever you're feeling when I kiss you I feel but its ten times more intense. It has nothing to do with how you and I feel about each other, that's just part of my powers as an empath. Oh, I can't ... wait, I can show you!"

"Show me?" Harry asked. "Show me what?"

Ginny smiled. "I talked to Emma a lot about my powers and she warned me that I would go a bit crazy around you. She told me of something I could do to better explain myself. I can share my magic

with you.”

Harry looked at her in surprise. “Share your magic? I’ve never heard that term before.”

She grinned. “It’s intense and it will take a lot out of both of us and ... well, it will do other things as well. But by sharing our magic, we’ll both feel and understand each other’s power.”

“That’s good because I’d like for you to understand my power as well.”

“There’s a drawback though.”

“There always is.” Harry replied with a grin. “We’ll risk it.”

Ginny smiled. “We’ll be closer ... I mean once we share magic it’s going to create kind of like a bond I guess. We’ll feel each other more.”

“Like know when one another is in danger?” Harry asked. “Because I can already sense that about you. Just as I knew how much you were enjoying yourself in New York.”

She grinned. “Really?”

“Yeah, I feel you, Gin, here in my heart and I would know if anything happened to you.”

“Me too and I know that I wouldn’t need my empathic powers to know it either. But this will bring us closer. I think it has more to do with our emotions. Like when we’re kissing, we might feel each other’s emotions, does that make sense?” She asked.

Harry nodded. “Yes it does. We’ll be closer in everything because we shared something that connects to every part of us. I get it.”

She grinned. “Alright. Let me show you then.” She took both of his hands in hers and closed her eyes. “Okay, now I want you to concentrate on the power within you.”



He nodded. "I strangely feel like I already know what to do."

"Like you've been waiting for this moment."

"Exactly."

Their fingertips met and they leaned closer together, eyes open as their hands met. A huge ball of blue, purple, red, green, gold, and white energy exploded from their hands and trapped them in a bubble. The power was around them and strong and intense and Ginny could barely breathe. Her body was on fire in a purely sexual way and she could tell that Harry was having the same experience. She wanted with every fibre of her being. She wanted to connect with him, body, soul, heart, and magic so desperately that she dragged him closer by a fistful of his hair and crushing her mouth to his.

Harry gasped when she touched him. He had never believed that he could feel so much at one time. He felt connected to her from every possible angle. He could feel her emotions and her want which mirrored his own, and he could feel his magic and hers running through his body. He was hard and when her fingers dived into his hair to yank him forwards he simply gasped and dragged his fingers through her own silk. Neither one of them noticed when the magic vanished since they broke the connection; they were too lost in each other to care.

Ginny moaned against his mouth as his rough calloused hands slid under her jumper before magically making it disappear. She ran her hands along his chest and did the same with his jumper. She no longer was coherently thinking about anything but touching him and being touched by him. His hands were on her skin, fiddling with the front clasp of the sexy black lace bra she wore. She gasped when he untied it and they spilled into his hands. His touch was magnified by the power that floated through them. Her body was burning and the punch of lust she felt for him was soaring through her bones to her very skin. Her nails raked down his back as their lips met over and over until she turned to nibble on his ear.

Harry groaned out loud when her lips met his ear. She sucked gently

as he ran his hands along her bare skin. His body was all heat with nothing that seemed to bank the fire and he could barely hold on to his emotions. He could feel everything that Ginny was feeling and to watch the emotions play over her face as she did only made him want her more. On some conscious level of his brain he knew that they were swimming into murky waters but her touch and taste was too amazing for him to care. He flipped her over so that she was beneath him on the couch and he crushed his lips to hers in a hard yet surprisingly soft kiss.

*Harry*, she yelled in her mind, loudly enough to have him look down at her in surprise. She merely smiled up at him and mindlessly told him to touch her. He could only grin at her and she realized that he had heard every word. She hadn't even connected to him with her mind which only told her just how closely they were intertwined at the moment. Her hands ran over his chest, grinning at the little bit of dark black hair that started around his naval and left a trail that disappeared beneath his jeans. She circled his bellybutton with her finger and his breath hitched. His hands were on her, stroking and building up the fires that were already inside of her. Her eyes never left his as she trailed a finger down his throat and chest to tap the top of his belt. His eyes had darkened almost black at her touch and they were full of desire.

"Ginny," he murmured as he took her lips again.

She moaned as her lips met his, his hands still stroking her skin. She dragged her fingers through his hair as her tongue met his and gasped when he turned his head to nibble at her throat. His hands moved up to her hair, making room for his lips to continue the journey his hands had just taken. She moaned his name and held him closer to her and she knew instantly what she wanted to do. She pushed him up and back so that he was lying down and she was on top of him.

He grinned up at her. "Changing the rules?"

She smiled. "My turn."

His left eyebrow rose slightly and then he grinned and crossed his

arms behind his head. "By all means, go crazy."

She laughed and kissed him softly on the lips, nibbling on his bottom lip before moving down to dip her tongue into the cleft on his chin. His face was a little rough from a day's worth of stubble which made her grin. She kind of liked the dark and rough look on him. He looked like a pirate. She moved down his throat, stopping to suck gently on his Adam's apple before she made a trail down his chest with soft kisses. He groaned and pulled her back up to his mouth. His hands stayed in her hair as they lost themselves in soft kisses and Ginny slid her hands down his chest to the belt on his jeans. She quickly untied it and unsnapped his jeans.

"Ginny," he moaned against her mouth. "What are you doing? I thought you didn't want to."

"Shh," she murmured. "I'm not ready yet for that."

He glanced at her quizzically as she undressed him. "I think you have entirely too many clothes on."

She grinned and kissed him softly and then trailed her hands down his stomach, following with her mouth. He grinned as she ran her hands along his chest and she kissed his bellybutton and then he gasped when she continued her path downwards.

Afterwards, she lay comfortably snuggled against him, her fingers trailing tiny hearts along his chest. She licked her lips, tasting him and then she kissed the center of his chest. Harry's breathing was heavy as he nibbled the fingers on her other hand. "I love you."

She smiled. "I know. I love you too."

He grinned and reached onto the floor to pull his jeans on. Ginny grinned at him and slipped his jumper over her head. He kissed her softly before sitting back down on the couch, leaving his chest bare and cuddling her closer. She curled up in his arms, her head resting on his chest.

"I can still feel your magic."

He nodded. "I know I can feel yours too. That was incredibly intense. The power ... the lick of power was intense enough on its own but when we started kissing ... I felt like if I stopped I would explode."

She nodded. "Me too. I feel closer to you now and ... I'm glad we agreed to do that."

"You don't think it pushed us into ... well, I mean we didn't, but you ..."

Ginny smiled against his chest. "No, that was your present. When I'm ready for you to make love to me, Harry, you'll be the first to know."

He grinned. "Good. And Gin?"

"Hmm?"

"That was some present. Where did you learn to ...? Do I want to know this?"

She laughed. "Emma and I talked and I looked at some books. Hermione has books on everything you know."

He laughed. "Yeah, I suppose she would." He ran his hand along her leg, still clad in the sexy blue jeans he had been drooling over all day as well as his jumper. "I love you."

She smiled. "Will you stay with me here? I just want to ... I want to fall asleep in your arms."

He smiled. "Sure."

She slipped out of his lap. "I'm just ... I'm going to go change. I'll be right back."

He nodded and watched her go into the adjoining bathroom. A few moments later she returned in short green shorts and Puddlemore United Jersey. She climbed into the big bed and Harry followed her. She snuggled into his arms, her head resting over his heart and he

could only grin. This is what he had been missing the most; the feel of Ginny in his arms. He closed his eyes and soon was fast asleep.

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Harry woke up the next morning to the feel of something tickling his nose. When he opened his eyes he realized that it was a face full of bright red hair. He rolled over and grinned when he felt Ginny snuggle closer. The sun was just starting to come through the window and he groaned. He had definitely not meant to spend the whole night.

“Gin, Ginny honey, wake up.”

She moaned and simply buried her face in her pillow.

“Ginny!” She didn’t move so he pressed a kiss to her neck. “Ginny.” He saw her smile and he grinned. “Faker. Its morning, come on, I’ve got to sneak back into my own room before someone finds us.”

She nodded. “Alright,” she rolled over and kissed him softly. “Thanks for staying with me.”

He grinned and kissed her again. “I didn’t mind. I love holding you.” He kissed her one last time before he stood up and headed over to the couch to find his jumper. He grinned at Ginny when he remembered that she had worn it the night before. He went into the bathroom and grabbed his jumper. He pulled it over his head and then found his glasses before he waved goodbye and carefully removed the silencing and locking charms. He peaked around the door and didn’t see anyone so he stepped out, closing the door behind him. To his relief, he made it back to his bedroom without anyone noticing but when he turned towards his bed he jumped. James was sitting there.

“Er, morning, Da.”

James nodded. “Yeah, morning. You’re out awfully *early* this morning, as it is only six.”

Harry shrugged. “Well ... so are you?”

"I came to talk to you about two hours ago. I woke up early and I couldn't sleep because it was bothering me. I come here and I find that you hadn't even been to bed." James replied.

"Yeah, maybe?"

James sighed. "I'm not stupid, Harry, and I'm not angry. You were with Ginny last night, am I right?"

He nodded. "Yes, but it's not what you think, I mean we didn't ... we didn't make love."

James nodded. "I'm relieved to hear that even though I know that you're old enough, well, almost old enough but that's beside the point. I don't want to know, I just want you to be careful with her."

"Of course I will be. I love her more than anything!"

James smiled. "Good, just checking."

Harry stripped his jumper off and replaced it with a tee-shirt before changing into his pyjama bottoms. "So what did you want to talk to me about?"

James sighed. "Lily."

"What's wrong, Da? Is she alright?"

James nodded. "She's fine. But there's going to be some difficulties in the next little while, press wise. I don't think that you've quite realized it and it was on my mind most of the night ... reporters are going to be all over you."

"Why?"

"Because suddenly your mother is alive and that's a big deal and ... they're probably going to be questioning you about me and how I kept it from you and stuff like that. I just want you to be ready."

Harry grinned. "You've been up all night worrying about this? Da, didn't you have anything better to do last night?"

James grinned. "Brat! I'm serious; the world is going to find out soon. I'm hoping it's not anytime soon as Lily needs time to re-adjust but it's going to come. Molly, Lexy, Tonks, Emma, Ginny, Hermione, and Fleur are taking her shopping this afternoon for new clothes and things like that. So it will just be the guys in the house. But I just want you to be ready."

Harry nodded. "I'll be ready, Da."

James smiled. "Good. Now why don't you get a few more hours of sleep and hope Bill and Charlie and the twins don't find out where you spent your evening."

Harry grinned. "If they do, I'd like to have the funeral here."

James laughed. "That can be arranged. See you later."

Harry watched him leave and he grinned. Fathers really did worry about everything.

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## **Chapter 69: Dodging Questions and Discovering Answers**

**Author's Notes:** i dedicate this chapter to aish for reporter idea and saz for helping me out with it! sry it took so long for an update but busy holdiays!  
plz review!!

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## **Chapter LXIX — Dodging Questions and Discovering Answers**

The holidays seemed to have flown by and now it was almost time to leave the manor and to head back to school. Ginny was a bit nervous since she had missed almost half the year and she wasn't sure how

other students were going to react to her randomly reappearing. She also wasn't sure how she was going to explain things about what she had been doing. Or why she had changed so much especially in physical appearances, her growth spurt had after all been extremely huge. But at the same time, she couldn't wait to see Colin, Luna, and Dee again. She had missed them terribly and even though she had received long letters filled with crazy things, it hadn't been the same. She missed her best friends. She missed talking and chatting and hearing stories and telling them everything. Emma had been a good friend and Ginny had come to love her like an older sister but it wasn't the same. She missed her best friends.

She looked up when the knock sounded on her bedroom door. She stood up and began to pack again, not wanting to be caught lost in her thoughts. "Come in."

Sirius opened the door and grinned at her. "Not packed yet? Just what have you been doing in here, Gorgeous?"

Ginny grinned. "Thinking. How are you doing?"

He shrugged and closed the door behind him before going to take a seat on the bed. "Pretty good. Lex and I are on a great footing now. She has this thing though about not letting me name the baby. I don't know why. I mean I thought that Bunt Black was a great name."

Ginny laughed. "Sirius, do you remember when we talked about your daughter loving you?"

He grinned. "Yeah, yeah, yeah so Lex said. I think it's cute though."

"You can think that all you want, but there is no way in hell that Lexy is going to let you name your baby Bunt. That's an absolutely ridiculous name!"

Sirius grinned. "I suppose it is. Listen Ginny, I uh, I wanted to talk to you about something before we head back to school. Lexy says that I should do it now while it's on my mind."

Ginny stopped what she was doing and took a seat on the bed next



to him. "Sure, what's up, Sirius?"

"Well ... I mean, I don't think that I have to say it ... but you're important to me. I love you and I see you as a goddaughter in a way. I said as much after that talk we had about what a prat I was being over the whole 'me being a dad thing'. But I was serious about it. I know, that doesn't happen to often ... but I meant it, you mean the world to me."

Ginny smiled. "I know you were. I love you too. When I had thought that you had died ... it was hard to take. Other than Bill and Charlie, you're my favourite big brother. But don't tell Gred and Forge."

Sirius laughed. "Not if I value my own life! Thanks and I guess you can say we did connect kind of quickly — mostly because you were a sweetheart who just accepted who I was and everything that first day in the garden of the Burrow. Anyway, back to what I was saying; it's because I love you and because you matter so much to me that I want to share with you something that you've given me, or something that you made me realize I'm lucky enough to have."

Ginny glanced at him quizzically. "What do you mean?"

"I'd like for you to be godmother to my daughter."

Ginny gasped in surprise. "Wow. Really?"

He nodded. "After I left you on Christmas Eve and I was lying in bed with Lex we were talking about it and Lexy agrees. We would both be really honoured if you would do this for us. I've never felt close to anyone like I do to you. The only other person who has ever ... Lily-Love — I used to flirt with her and tease her and have long talks with her too. But it's different with you because ... you're so much younger and I don't even know what it is exactly, but you're special, Gorgeous. I don't know if you have a godfather or not but I feel like I'm yours sometimes almost as much as I'm Harry's and I want my daughter to have someone special looking out for her. I think that that someone should be you. I wouldn't trust anyone else with her life."

Ginny blinked back tears before she wrapped her arms around him.

“Oh, I’d love to be!”

Sirius sighed in relief. “Good, for a second there I thought that you were going to say no.”

Ginny laughed. “No way! But as the newest Black’s godmother I forbid you to call your daughter Buntz.”

Sirius laughed. “Lex already has. Hey Gin, what do you think of the name Eugenia?”

Ginny rolled her eyes as she returned to her packing. “Lexy really has her work cut out with you, you know that, right?”

Sirius placed a puzzled look on his face. “Whatever do you mean? I’m as innocent as a newborn baby!”

Ginny laughed and scooped Midnight into her arms to cuddle. “Yeah right, innocent my ass!”

Sirius grinned. “Your ass is innocent? Now that I don’t believe!”

“Sirius!”

He laughed. “Alright, alright, I’m going. Hey Gorgeous?”

“Hmm?” She asked as she placed Midnight back down on her bed.

“Just to inform you, James is going to be godfather but I haven’t asked him yet.”

Ginny smiled. “Surprise, surprise. I think that’s wonderful. He’ll be really pleased.”

Sirius grinned. “Yeah, but unlike him I’m not going to stumble my way through it.”

“What do you mean?”

Sirius grinned. “Nothing, just memories.” He stood up and leaned

down to kiss her cheek. "I don't know if I told you, but you're incredibly beautiful. I can see why Harry almost swallowed his tongue when he saw you return. And what's this I hear about a bellybutton ring?"

Ginny laughed. "It was Emma's idea but I'll admit, I secretly wanted one and didn't put up that much of a fuss. Mum flipped out when she saw it!"

"I can imagine! Just how many surprises did you accumulate in New York?"

Ginny grinned sheepishly. "Only one more, I uh, I got a tattoo."

Sirius goggled at her. "What?"

She blushed scarlet. "I haven't told anyone else about that! You can't tell anyone!"

"Where?"

"What?"

Sirius grinned. "Where is the tattoo?"

She blushed deeper and placed a hand over her inner thigh. "Here. It's a Hungarian Horntail."

He laughed. "Man! Harry is going to die when he sees that!"

She grinned. "I know! He doesn't know about it yet, I'm ... well I'm waiting for the right moment! Do you think he'll like it?"

Sirius grinned. "Oh, I really think he'll like it! You wild woman!"

She laughed. "It was Emma's idea and at first I thought no way, but then I just ... well, I thought about how Harry would react to it and ... I wanted it."

Sirius laughed. "I cannot wait to tease Harry about this one. Tell me

when he sees it, Gorgeous, because I have got to know how he reacts to that one!"

She blushed. "I can't even believe I just told you about that!"

He shrugged. "It's me, babe, I'm easy to talk to!"

She grinned. "I guess so."

Sirius kissed her cheek again. "Alright, I have to go make sure I've got all of my stuff, Lex and I are leaving earlier than you so we can get settled in our quarters again."

Ginny nodded. "Alright, oh, and Sirius?"

"Hmm?" He asked as he placed his hand on the door. "If you tell anyone about this I'll have to sick Gred and Forge on you."

Sirius laughed. "You think that they could actually take me on?"

Her eyebrow rose slightly and her grin flashed. "Maybe, maybe not. But if they can't, there's always bat bogeys."

Sirius paled slightly. "The stories I've heard from Bill and Charlie are enough. See you later, Gorgeous."

Ginny watched him leave with a grin. She really loved him sometimes, he was almost as cool of an older brother as Bill and Charlie, except there was one good thing about him. Unlike Bill and Charlie, he was more godfather; therefore he didn't pick on her quite as much. She grinned to herself and continued her packing.

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While Ginny was talking to Sirius, Harry was doing some last minute packing and he found himself lost in thought about what had happened between him and Ginny. It had been intense and something that he had never expected from her. He couldn't stop thinking about it or how they had shared their magic. His thoughts had continually been brought back to that night and even though he

had been busy with other things, it was Ginny and Christmas that was on his mind. Especially the memory of when they had shared magic, and other things; but the magic ... he felt like he could still feel her power inside of him. They hadn't spoken telepathically since she got back and he wanted to, just to see what it would be like if she was in the same room when he spoke in her mind. He also wanted to see how it would affect their magical bond. The only thing that he knew for sure was that it was intense and he felt like she was permanently a part of him now in a way that he couldn't even begin to explain.

His thoughts were interrupted by a knock on his bedroom door. He figured that it was his mum but he was surprised when he called out for them to come in and looked over at Draco.

"Draco, hi."

Draco nodded. "Yeah uh ... Potter can I come in?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah sure." His eyebrow lifted in surprise when he closed the door behind him. "Got something on your mind?"

"Yeah. Listen ... your mum she ... I don't even know how to start this."

"What's up, Draco? You'll find that I can be a good listener." Harry replied.

Draco managed a small smile. "So I've been told." He sighed. "Alright, Lily talked to me after that little scene I made on Christmas. We talked about a lot of things and I found myself opening up, more than I thought I could actually. Anyway, the gist of it is ... she told me to talk to you and to trust you."

"And you're just willing to do that now?" Harry asked.

Draco shrugged. "You said so before, I need a friend. Look, Harry, I just ... I'm a pretty easy going bloke once you get to know me and I know that I used to strut around the castle acting like a BFD, but I'm not. I had a bad childhood and I witnessed a lot of things that my father did and others did; things that I would love more than anything

to forget. But I can't forget them. I'm not making excuses for the way I acted ... I mean, hell, I was a prat and I know it, but I'm trying to make up for that now. It's because of those things that the one girl I really like wants nothing to do with me."

"You said that your father raped and killed Delilah's mother. Is that true?" Harry asked as he looked at Draco closely.

Draco nodded. "It is. I saw it all happen. I was about eight. No one can prove it though, Father gets away with everything."

Harry nodded and took a seat on his bed. "Alright, why don't you start from the beginning Draco. If you want me to be your friend then you have to trust me; with everything."

Draco let out a deep breath. "Okay."

By the time that Draco was finished, Harry couldn't believe what he had heard. Lucius Malfoy was even a bigger snake than he had ever imagined. Draco had told him tales of murder and rape naturally but he had witnessed over four murders, been beaten by Voldemort himself, and had suffered emotional abuse from his family. The latter Harry had figured out on his own; Draco was hardly going to admit to experiencing emotional abuse. He had lived a hard life, one that constantly surprised Harry every time he thought about it because he still remembered the cocky little jerk Malfoy had started out as. He also knew that Draco was taking a big step by telling him all this and he was ultimately telling Harry that he wasn't changing sides and that he trusted them with his life. He knew that it was one of the first signs of Draco moving forward. He made a point to tell his father that it might be time for Draco to learn everything.

"Wow, I don't even know what to say to this." Harry replied calmly when Draco had finished. "How does one even comment on it?"

Draco shrugged. "I don't think you're exactly supposed to comment on it. I don't even know what the hell I expected you to say!"

Harry sighed. "I don't know what to say, but I do know that it was hard for you to just tell me all of that. Draco, do you know what your father

did with the bodies of those people he killed?”

He shook his head. “No, I don’t, but I assume that he got rid of the evidence. I overheard the house elves talking once and they mentioned something about transfiguration before burial.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, that makes sense. I remember in fourth year when the imposter Moody killed Barty Crouch and transfigured his body into a bone first.”

Draco nodded. “Well, he’d probably do something like that.”

“Yeah. Listen, Draco, we’ve uh, we’ve kept you in the dark a lot and you know it. I mean, we weren’t really sure if we could trust you for the longest time. I did do Legilimency on you, but still we couldn’t be too sure you know?”

“I get that. I was a really big jerk and not to mention my father’s record isn’t exactly pearly white.”

“Yeah, well I don’t believe in the sins of the father. Lucius Malfoy is more than a prat and if even half of what you just said is true ... well, hell ... he’s going to have a lot to answer for one day.”

Draco snorted. “Do you think he’ll actually be caught? He escaped from Azkaban!”

“Yeah with Voldemort’s help! Do you honestly think that your father is smart enough to escape on his own?”

“No, I guess not. He’s impulsive is what he is and his ego is ... pride is a big issue with him.”

Harry nodded. “Good to know, it might come in handy at one time.” He sighed. “Draco, you do know that when it comes down to the final battle you might —”

“Have to kill my father,” he interrupted. “Trust me, I know that. I don’t know if I will be able to do it but at the same time I know that if I have to I’ll be ready. Does that make any sense?”

“Yeah it does. I know how you feel.”

He nodded. “Alright, well I’m going to go find the rest of my stuff. I’ll talk to you later on the train.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I’m going to find out about telling you all those secrets.”

Draco grinned. “You really trust me? After all of the crap I did?”

Harry grinned. “It’s in the past. I always trust my friends.”

Draco smiled as he opened the door. “Thanks for that.”

Harry grinned as Draco left his room and the first thing he did was head to his parents’ bedroom. He usually just walked in but he stopped with his hand on the handle; now that his parents were back together it was probably better to knock. He didn’t want to walk in on anything that he didn’t want to see. He heard James yell out come in so he stepped inside.

James was standing in the middle of the room buttoning up his shirt. His jeans were undone and his hair was wet. “Morning Harry, all packed?”

Harry nodded. “Pretty much. I need to talk to you for a minute.”

“Of course, what’s going on?”

Harry sighed and plopped himself down onto the bed. “Draco just came and talked with me, a long intense talk about his past.”

James’ eyebrow rose questioningly as he finished getting dressed before searching for some socks. “And? That’s a good thing right? It means that he took Lily’s advice and looked at you as a friend and that he’s willing to fight against Voldemort and his father.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah and that’s what I wanted to talk to you about. I think he should know Da, about the Order and about Snape. I think



this is a big step towards proving himself and he needs something ... something to hold onto, to help him prepare. There's going to be a final showdown between him and his father. He knows it and I know it, he needs to be prepared."

"Isn't that what the DA is for?"

"It's not the same thing and you know it. He needs to know what's going on. We've kept him in the dark long enough."

James nodded. "I think that you're right. I'll mention it to Dumbledore because it's ultimately his decision. He's head of the Order. There's only so much I can do."

"Alright, I guess that's it for now then."

James grinned. "Remember what I said on, uh, well the day that I was in your room."

Harry grinned at his father's embarrassed look. "The day you found out that I spent the night with Ginny?"

"You spent the night where?" Lily asked as she stepped out of the bathroom.

Harry blushed. "Uh, Gin and I were talking and we fell asleep in her room."

Lily nodded. "Uh-huh ... I don't want to know. I think it's probably safer."

James laughed. "Good idea, love. Do you remember what I said, Harry, about your mother?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, you think it's going to start today?"

James nodded. "Aye I do. Listen, we're stopping at headquarters this morning before we go to the train station. Dumbledore has something to talk with us and Lily wants to rejoin the Order." He replied before turning to glare at his wife.

Lily shrugged as she pinned her hair up out of her face. "Yes I do. If you think for one moment that I'm going to sit around here and not do anything when my son is the sole focus of some prophecy, think again, James."

James sighed. "I'm not going to argue, I know that you have a point."

Harry nodded. "Alright, well, I'll just go grab my stuff. Da, if we're stopping at headquarters, does that mean that Dumbledore already has a certain degree of trust towards Draco."

"Aye, I think he does. But we'll have to see right?"

"Right."

Harry left the room wondering just how more intense this entire day was going to get.

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The stop at headquarters led to some interesting questions. First of all, Dumbledore was there and he explained to Draco very quickly what the Order was and why he was being informed. Draco was thoroughly surprised at this, though he did admit to knowing a bit about it or what it had been about in the first war. He asked to join but Dumbledore told him he had to wait until he turned seventeen. He was also very impressed with the fact that it wasn't only Harry that trusted him. The craziest thing was when Snape showed up and the news came out about just what role he played in the order of things. Harry wasn't sure what happened after that, but everyone seemed to disappear and through no fault of his own he somehow ended up alone in the kitchen of Grimmauld Place with Snape.

Snape was busy pacing back and forth around the table as Harry glanced around wondering if there was any way that he could sneak off without being noticed. His hopes were dashed when Snape whirled around and sneered at him. "So, Draco knows everything now, Potter? Who saw that it was fit to inform him? You!"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, he knows everything. Dumbledore told him everything because we trust him. Dumbledore believes him and so do I, though I guess we can't trust Dumbledore's judgment completely since he does trust you. "

Snape sneered. "Enough! The last thing that I want is to listen to your moaning and groaning! You're just like your father, all ego and conceited. I've had Dumbledore breathing down my back because the mighty Potter has been complaining that I've been grading you unfairly. It's hardly my fault that you're a horrible potions student!"

Harry stood up, his eyes flashing in anger. The last thing he wanted was to sit here and listen to that foul-faced git screaming at him. "I'm good at potions! My O.W.L. grade proved it yet you continue to give me low and unreasonable grades! My potion is usually the same as Hermione's if not better yet she gets an O and I get an A or D! It's not fair and you know it!"

"Harry, why are you yelling? You're going to wake up Walburga's portrait." Lily replied as she stepped into the kitchen. "That's the last thing any of us need at the moment!"

"Sorry Mum," Harry murmured as he sat back down.

Snape on the other hand was staring in shock. He couldn't seem to take his eyes off of Lily as she moved towards the stove and made herself a cup of tea before taking a seat next to Harry. "L-L-L-Lily?"

Lily nodded. "Yes Severus?"

"How is this? You were dead?"

Lily shook her head. "No I was in an extremely long coma."

Harry snorted and Lily smacked his head gently. "Sorry."

Snape glared at Harry. "And you knew this, Potter, and didn't find it fit to tell me!"

Harry shrugged. "Why would I tell you anything, especially that my

mum was alive?”

“Why you little - ?”

“SEVERUS!”

“What?” Snape exploded.

Lily glared at him. “Why should Harry tell you that I was alive? Since when have you ever cared about me in any way? I stood up for you against James in school but you never showed me any respect. I’ve also learned exactly how you treat my son first hand and from stories. Harry is not James and I think that you’ve taken a childhood hatred too far. Get over yourself.” She turned to Harry and smiled. “Come on, sweetheart, it’s time to go to train station now.”

Harry nodded and stood up. “Alright.” He took his mum’s hand and led her out of the room, leaving a shocked Snape standing in the kitchen. “Why do you suppose he went crazy like that?”

Lily shrugged. “I’m not sure. Let’s not dwell on it. We have other things to worry about, like reporters.”

“Do you really think that there’s going to be a lot of reporters there?”

James nodded as he came down the stairs. “I know there is. I already heard from King that there’s been a leak about Lily as well as the fact that the Boy Who Lived’s girlfriend just returned from New York.”

Harry groaned. “Are they going to bring her into this?”

James sighed. “Harry, you’re famous! You always have been and I’ve shielded you from the spotlight to the best of my abilities but you’re almost a man now. You have to deal with them even if it is only running away and saying no comment. I know for a fact that there’s going to be a swarm of them at the train station.”

Harry nodded and didn’t say anything else about it. They took ministry cars to King’s Cross station. It was only moments that they were out in the open when reporters swarmed in. James swore

angrily at the sight of them.

"Shit, Lily get back in the car, come on, this is the last thing that you need right now!" James exclaimed.

Lily sighed. "It's now or later, James, and I'd prefer to get it out of the way."

James nodded and took her hands in his bringing it to his lips. "Alright."

Ginny fought her way towards them and grabbed Harry's hand. "I didn't want to let you face the dogs alone."

He grinned. "Thanks, I don't think that it's going to be too bad though; at least I hope not." He kept a scowl on his face as they headed towards the platform.

"Lord Potter, Lord Potter, do you have a statement to make for the *Daily Prophet* on the fact that Lady Lily Potter has finally awakened from her coma?" A blonde reporter asked with large white teeth.

A skinny reporter with buck teeth and huge glasses moved forward next. "Mr. Potter, is it true that James Potter never informed you that your mother was still alive? The viewers with *Mars Magazine* are dying to know!"

Rita Skeeter stepped forward. "Harry, is it true that Healer Dolan kept your mother's life a secret all of these years? That your father aided him in this? How do you feel about this?"

James placed a hand on Harry's shoulder. "Ignore them, Harry. Their like vultures and won't stop no matter what you say."

"Lord Potter, is it true that you never told your son that his mother was alive?"

"No comment," James replied as he pushed his family forward.

"Mr. Potter, is it true that your girlfriend went off to New York and had

an affair with a musician?”

“Mr. Potter, is it true that Ginevra Weasley is two-timing you with Viktor Krum? How do you feel that two of your past girlfriends had an affair with the international Quidditch star?”

Harry glared at the reporter and Ginny’s hand tightened in his but it didn’t stop the firing of questions.

“Mr. Potter, how does it feel to know that your mum is alive and well?”

“Mr. Potter, how angry were you when you learned of your mother being alive?”

“Mr. Potter, how angry were you when you learned of your girlfriend’s deceit?”

“Mr. Potter, is it true that you’re engaged?”

“Mr. Potter, is it true that Hermione Granger is having your lovechild?”

Then as if a switch turned the questions were peppered towards Lily.

“How do you feel about this, Lady Potter? Are you upset that your husband never informed your son or the public about your condition?”

“Lady Potter, how do you feel about coming back and discovering that you’re going to be a grandmother?”

James growled and the reporters turned to him.

“Lord Potter, does your wife know of your affair with Rita Skeeter?”

“Leave my family alone!” James demanded and stood in front of his wife as the questions returned to Lily. “We have no comment!”

“Lady Potter, is it true that Sirius Black betrayed you years ago and was the cause of you to lose so much of your life?”

“Lord Potter, how do you feel about the fact that your wife is alive and

well after all these years?”

“Lord Potter, how do you think that —”

“ENOUGH!” Harry exclaimed angrily as the reporters swarmed in around him. Ginny clung tightly to his hand as Lily and James stood behind him. They had lost Draco, Hermione, and the rest of the Weasleys somewhere when the reporters had come in. “I’ll answer your damn questions!”

James placed a hand on his son’s shoulder. “Harry —”

“No Da, I have something to say.” He turned to look at the huge group of reporters. “First of all, where on earth do you get such ridiculous information? Okay, yes my mum is alive and NO I didn’t know! I was angry at first but I’ve accepted it as something that I would have done had I been in my father’s position. Sirius Black is NOT the reason my mother was in a coma! Hermione Granger is NOT pregnant and especially NOT with my lovechild! Hermione Granger was NEVER my girlfriend! I’m NOT having a baby so my mum is NOT going to be a grandmother! My Da did NOT have an affair with Rita Skeeter! Ginny is NOT having an affair with Krum OR a musician and NO I AM NOT engaged!”

One of the reporters snorted. “Like we’re supposed to believe that,” he murmured to the woman next to him.

“It’s the truth,” Harry demanded. “Something that vultures like you know nothing about!”

The blonde woman from before smiled. “We only seek to discover the truth, Mr. Potter. So you accept the fact that your father never told you that your mother was alive?”

Harry nodded. “Aye I do, as I understand why he did it. I was angry at first but I get it now.”

“Really, Mr. Potter? Are you sure that you’re not just giving false facts to maintain your family’s reputation?”

Harry let out a sound like a growl. "NO I AM NOT!"

Ginny looked at Harry in surprise. She had never expected him to sit there and tell a reporter anything, other than telling them off of course. And where had the reporters come up with such ridiculous things? Her having an affair with a musician and Viktor Krum? She stifled a giggle at the thought. They must have tried to dig things up on her since she was dating the Boy Who Lived. She had never really thought about herself being in the spotlight before. She stopped for a moment to think about it but it didn't make her that uncomfortable. She loved Harry and she knew that as long as she did there would be stories about her but she could handle it. She smiled to herself then and moved a bit closer to Harry, grinning when his arm wrapped comfortably around her waist.

James' hand was still sitting on Harry's shoulder but his grip was tightening. The questions they were firing at his son were ridiculous and they were making him angry at every word. How dare they even come up with such garbage? But this was definitely the most vicious attack that he could remember. Reporters had always been after Harry but he had shielded him most of his life. The only thing that he could think of was that Healer Dolan had obviously let quite a bit slip after they had left the hospital and he planned to have a little word with the man. But where had they come up with this stuff about Ginny? He sighed; who knew for sure but right now he just wanted to get his family the hell out of here.

Lily on the other hand, was smiling inside. She was pleased to see her son take charge the way he was, though she had to admit, some of the questions had really given her a jolt. Such as the one marking her as a grandmother. She hardly felt old enough for that to happen especially when Harry had mentioned wanting a brother or sister. But when she thought about it, Harry was only one year younger than she and James had been when they married. It was something she would have to think about. She shook the thoughts from her head and turned her attention back to Harry and the reporters.

"Mr. Potter, since you're in the state of answering questions, do you have any comments for *Witch Weekly* about what happened in the Department of Mysteries in June with You-Know-Who?"



Harry glared at them. "First of all his name is Voldemort! Learn to say the name! Fear of the name only increases fear of the thing itself! Second of all, he's a blood thirsty psycho killing maniac, what more do you want to know?"

"Mr. Potter, what do you think of He Who Must Not Be Named and his idea of Limpieza de Sangre?" One of the reporters asked. "Is it true the Dolores Umbridge spoke of this purifying of the wizarding world, with you last year?"

Harry snorted. "Dolores Umbitch, sorry, Umbridge, is a fool and purifying the wizarding world? Don't you think that Limpieza de Sangre is a little bold on old Riddle's part considering he's a half-blood himself? By and by — Riddle is Voldemort."

There was a gasp in the crowd at this and one of the reporters stepped forward and turned their attention to Ginny. "Miss Weasley, what do you think about this? Didn't you yourself play a role in He Who Must Not Be Named's mission when you were merely eleven? We're you aware that he was a half-blood?"

Ginny pushed the magical microphone away from her face. "I think that Harry has a point. Tom Riddle is nothing more than a half-blood who thinks he's better than everyone else. Blood is not important whether you're pureblood, half-blood, muggleborn — who cares? It only makes him more of a prat because he does care!"

"Why do you constantly call him Tom Riddle?" One of the reporters shouted out.

"Because it's his name," Harry replied. "Lord Voldemort is a nickname that causes fear in people's hearts so I think that everyone should call him by his given name. Tom Marvolo Riddle."

Rita Skeeter stepped forward. "So basically, Mr. Potter, you're saying that the world should call You-Know-Who, Tom Riddle?"

Harry nodded. "Yes I do. Dumbledore thinks so too and has been saying it for years."

“Mr. Potter, what do you have to say about the rumours going around about Miss Weasley and her affairs?”

“I’d like to say that it’s all lies. Ginny is my girlfriend and she’s not with anyone but me.”

“Mr. Potter, is it true that you and Miss Weasley are engaged to be married because she’s pregnant with your child?”

Harry’s eyebrow rose in surprise. “Well, that would certainly be news to me.” He grinned down at Ginny. “Got anything that I should know?”

Ginny laughed and kissed him softly. “Nope.”

Harry grinned and turned back to the reporters. “Ginny is not pregnant and no we’re not engaged. We might be someday, but not now.”

“Harry, I have one more question?” Rita Skeeter called out.

Harry sighed. “Last one as I have a train to catch.”

Rita Skeeter smiled. “How does it feel to know that you just probably made Tom Riddle a very angry man?”

Harry’s face hardened. “I think that it might show the world just what a coward he really is. That’s enough questions.” He held Ginny’s hand tightly in his and they headed onto the train.

“Alright, Harry, you have a lot of explaining to do!” Ginny demanded.

Harry grinned. “Whatever do you mean?”

“You talking to reporters? And without cursing any of them? Are you sick?” She asked, placing her hand on his forehead in mock concern.

Harry laughed. “No, just tired. It was time for some questions to be answered.” They found a compartment with Neville, Luna, Colin, and Demelza and he grinned when Ginny squealed in delight and ran into

Colin, Luna, and Demelza's arms. He felt his mirror heat up in his pocket and he whipped it out. There was a frosty message written across it.

**I'm proud of you for that. Message me later, Da.**

He grinned and slipped it back into his pocket hoping no one had noticed before he turned his attention back to Ginny.

Colin was gaping at her. "Look at you! Shit Gin, you're a total babe!"

She laughed. "Thank you, I think! Merlin I missed you guys so much!" She hugged her friends again.

Demelza grinned. "We have so much to talk about!"

Ginny nodded. "You can say that again — the question is where do we begin?"

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## **Chapter 70: Ginny's Return to School**

**Author's Notes:** plz review!

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### **Chapter LXX — Ginny's Return to School**

The train ride home proved to be very interesting. Everyone wanted to know about Ginny, where she had been, what she had learned, and how incredible she looked. She stayed snuggled in Harry's lap and he kept a possessive arm around her waist throughout the train ride as he listened to her talk. Colin and Demelza were still there as were Neville and Luna. Draco had wandered in at some point after the prefect's meeting but like Ron and Hermione, he had to constantly be patrolling the corridors.

"Ginny, just look at you," Demelza cried. "You're beautiful. And your

hair! It looks wonderful! How do you feel?"

Ginny grinned as she leaned back comfortably against Harry.  
"Incredible. I feel like a new person but exactly the same at the same time."

Demelza nodded. "We have so much to talk about."

Ginny nodded. "Speaking of, I've been dying to know ... Mr. Dream Guy from last year?"

Demelza snorted. "Hasn't noticed that I'm alive and yes I do still like him, a lot, really a lot."

"Who's this dream guy?" Colin asked with curiosity.

"It's not important, Colin."

Colin grinned. "No really? I mean, who's this bloke you like? And why hasn't he noticed you were alive. You're gorgeous, Dee, what's wrong with the bloke?"

Demelza blushed and glanced at Ginny. "No idea."

Ginny laughed at her two friends. She still couldn't believe that Dee obviously still had the hots for Colin. She had wondered about it while she was away and it made her grin to think about it. However, she knew that Colin wasn't going to be interested in Demelza until she was older. He still viewed her as a younger sister/best friend. But Ginny definitely noticed that Demelza was growing up in all of the right places and by next year, she was going to have guys throwing themselves at her.

"So what else has happened with you guys?" Ginny asked.

Colin shrugged. "Not too much. I was dating Rose Zeller from Hufflepuff, she's a fourth year. But we broke up before Christmas. We didn't suit too well."

Ginny laughed. "Rose and you? Definitely not! What about you, Dee,

got a boyfriend yet?”

Demelza blushed. “Zacharias Smith asked me out but I told him that I had to think about it. I mean, he’s kind of annoying and I’ve always got the impression that he’s a little full of himself.”

Harry grinned. “I hate that guy!”

Ginny laughed and kissed Harry softly, ignoring the way that it made her blood boil and her magic tingle. “And you don’t have a reason to hate him.”

“Everything Dee just said is my reason to hate that guy. Come on, Nev, back me up.”

Neville grinned. “He does drive me crazy too.”

Demelza sighed. “See? So I don’t know what I’m going to do about that. We’ll have to see.”

Colin grimaced. “I agree with Harry and Neville, don’t go out with Smith! He’s so not right for you!”

Demelza sighed and leaned over closer to Ginny so that only she could hear. “He says that about every guy that I’m interested in.”

Ginny grinned. “We really have to talk later.”

Demelza nodded. “Alright. So Colin, why don’t you tell Ginny who your newest crush is?”

Colin shrugged. “I ran into Mandy Brocklehurst over Christmas break and —”

“NO!” Ginny protested. “Colin! You’ve liked her forever and she’s so not worth it.”

Luna nodded eagerly, causing everyone to remember that she was still in the room. “I heard Mandy is handy.”

Everyone turned to look at her with an odd look on their face.

Colin grinned. "Well, Luna, handy could be a good thing."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Harry! You say something!"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know too much about Mandy; she's uh, popular? And I know she hangs around with Lisa Turpin, Padma, and Su Li. That's all I've got."

"See, Harry doesn't think there's anything wrong with her!" Colin replied.

"Colin! You've had this obsession with Mandy Brocklehurst since third year, get over it! So she has big boobs — what are her other qualities?"

Harry grinned. "An annoying giggle."

Neville nodded. "Extremely annoying giggle; or how she really makes people wonder how the hell she got into Ravenclaw."

Demelza laughed. "How she's the perfect joke for the dumb blonde jokes?"

Colin pouted. "But she's so —"

Ginny rolled her eyes. "You can be so shallow sometimes. You have to find a girl who's worthy of you. We only want you to be happy."

Colin sighed. "I know."

He opened his arms and Ginny hurried into them for a long hug. "I really missed you."

Colin grinned. "Me too. Dee doesn't pick on me nearly as much."

Ginny laughed and kissed his cheek before she curled back into Harry. "It's good to be back."

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By the time that they arrived at Hogwarts, the school was buzzing with the return of Ginny. People were wondering where she had been the first four months of term. She was pointed at and talked about almost as much as Harry usually was. It made Harry grin as he held his hand in hers on their way into the Great Hall.

“What are you grinning about?” Ginny asked, as they ducked under Peeves who was throwing balloons filled with pudding at people who came through the door.

Harry shrugged as they took their seats at the table. “It’s nice to not be in spotlight for once. You’ve got all the attention, honey.”

Ginny smiled. “Well, then, since I’ve got all this attention, why don’t I start making my point right now?”

“Point?” Harry asked, glancing at her quizzically.

She grinned and slipped her arms around his neck and into his hair. “Yeah, my point, got a problem with it?”

He grinned. “Yeah. I’ve been wondering why it’s taken so long.”

She laughed and then leaned in and captured his bottom lip in her mouth. She felt his breath twitch and she grinned. She nibbled gently on his lip before she kissed him deeply. The power of it grabbed hold of her quickly but this time she expected it. She could feel his magic singing through her body as hers almost seemed to be reaching out to touch his, to connect. She knew that he must have been feeling something similar by the way his hands clenched softly against her hips.

Harry turned his head to angle the kiss and slipped his tongue inside of her mouth. He didn’t get too far however as something rapped him over the head. They broke apart and he looked up at Sirius who was holding a rolled up newspaper in his hand.

Sirius grinned. “I’ve been sent here by Lex, to remind you that public

displays of affection are frowned upon in the Great Hall, especially to that level. Tongue, Mr. Potter?" He pretended to wipe a tear from his eye. "I'm so proud."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Right."

Sirius grinned and then he winked at Ginny. "Harry, when you find out Ginny's secret, I want to know every single little detail."

"Secret?" Harry asked, glancing between the two of them.

Ginny blushed. "Sirius!"

He grinned. "Hint, hint, Harry, secrets can be found on thighs." He turned around and walked away whistling.

Ginny's mouth dropped open as she stared after him. "I'm going to kill him! I'm going to bloody murder him with my bare hands!"

Harry laughed. "You do that, but what's this secret, Gin?" He leaned closer and placed his hand on her thigh. "What do your thighs have to do with it?"

Ginny blushed. "It's nothing, Harry. Sirius is making up stuff."

Harry shrugged and kissed her softly. "Okay, I'll get it out of you later."

Their conversation was interrupted by Dumbledore standing up.

"Welcome back everyone. To those of you that went home during the Christmas holidays, I hope everyone enjoyed them. Now tuck in."

Food appeared on the tables and everyone dug in pretty quickly. Everyone at the table had questions for Ginny about where she had been and why she'd gone away. To them, New York City seemed fascinating. Once the meal was done and Harry managed to drag Ginny away from the crowd; they headed up to the common room.

"My, my, you are the popular one."



Ginny laughed. "Jealous, love?"

Harry snorted. "Right, 'cause I want more attention."

She grinned and kissed their joined hands. "You never know." She stopped him then as she noticed from the corner of her eye that Romilda Vane was watching them. She remembered Harry telling her that Vane had been particularly hell bent on trying to get Harry for herself.

Harry grinned down at her. "What?"

Ginny shrugged and stood up on her toes, wrapping her arms around his neck. "Nothing, I just want to kiss you."

"Oh yeah? Then why aren't you?"

She smiled and kissed him, long, hard, and deep. He groaned against her mouth, frustrated that her hair was all tied up in a complicated set of twists and braids so he raked his hands down the back of her robes, stopping to rest on the small firm behind. Ginny pulled back and raised her eyebrow slightly.

He grinned sheepishly. "Oops, my hand slipped."

"Mmm-hmm, I bet." She slid her hands down and grabbed a hold of his bum, giving him a little pinch and she couldn't help but notice out of the corner of her eye, the way Romilda's hands tightened into fists and she glared at her with pure hatred. She grinned up at Harry. "My hand slipped."

Harry laughed and leaned down closer to whisper something in her ear so outrageous that her mouth dropped open. "Harry James Potter!"

He grinned. "What?"

She blushed deeply as she thought about his words. She didn't even think what he had suggested was anatomically possible. "You are the

devil.”

He kissed her again. “And you love me to death. Now come on.”

He took her hand in his again and they made their way the rest of the way into the common room. Harry didn’t get that much more time with her that night and he understood as she wanted to see her friends. He kissed her goodnight and headed up to his dormitory to unpack.

Ginny on the other hand, told Colin goodnight and dragged Demelza upstairs. Once they were safely in her dormitory, she grinned. “Okay, now spill, everything.”

Demelza sighed. “I don’t know where to start. You know about the dream I had, right? Well, I’ve had quite a few more, some a lot more intense. In some of them, he’s doing things to me, that I don’t even think that I should know about.”

Ginny laughed. “Dee! Such wicked dreams, I’m so proud of you!”

She blushed. “Remember how I was unsure before though, if it was Colin I liked or if it was the dream version I had come up with?”

Ginny nodded. “Aye, I remember.”

“It’s definitely Colin, all the way. I can’t even be in the same room with him anymore without getting these tingly feelings in my stomach and sometimes he’s just so cute I just want to lean over and grab him and snog him senseless.”

Ginny laughed. “I’d love to see Colin’s reaction to that one.”

“Well, I mean, I really like him. I love him for who he is and as my best friend but at the same time I know that these feelings I have are definitely more than friendship.” She explained. “But he treats me like I’m ten. Every time I show even the slightest bit of interest in another guy, he gets all ‘he’s not good for you, look what’s wrong with him’. And I found out from Vicki Frobisher that when I had a crush on Geoff Hooper, Colin went and told him that if he came anywhere near me with the interest of more than friendship he would kill him. Can you

believe that?”

She really couldn't. Colin was definitely acting a bit crazy. “He actually said that?”

Demelza nodded. “Yes! I even went and questioned him about it!”

“What did he say?”

“He said that Geoff was an idiot and wasn't worth my time! No wonder why I can't get a boyfriend, every guy who comes close gets scared away! I don't need a big brother looking out for me!” Demelza exclaimed.

Ginny nodded. “You're right about that. I'll have a word with him and see if I can smarten him up. In the meantime, I think the next guy that you're interested in, well, we just won't tell Colin about it.”

Demelza smiled. “Good idea.” She moved over on the bed to hug Ginny tight. “I really missed you. Colin's great and all, but ... I missed the girl talk.”

“Me too. Emma was amazing and I love her a lot. She became like an older sister to me, but she wasn't you guys! Have you been hanging out with Luna at all?”

Demelza nodded. “A bit, yeah, but you know how she gets, all weird sometimes.”

Ginny nodded. “I know. Anyway listen, I talked to Luna earlier and she's meeting us in the Room of Requirement in half an hour. I have some huge things to discuss with you two, no guys allowed.”

“Ooh, is it good stuff?”

She laughed. “Isn't it always?”

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Half an hour later, Ginny had borrowed Harry's invisibility cloak and

map, and she and Demelza had huddled under it to get to the room. Since Demelza was the tallest, at 5'6 ½, she held the cloak over them. Once they were inside, Luna arrived only moments later.

"Hello Ginny, hello Dee."

"Luna!" Ginny exclaimed and hurried forward to hug her friend close. Luna was weird and odd but she was fiercely loyal and one of the best people to go to for advice. She had also proved herself last year at the Department of Mysteries and Ginny knew that she was one of her best friends. "I was a bit swarmed on the train, but I missed you!"

Luna smiled warmly. "I missed you too. It wasn't the same without you around."

Ginny smiled. "Good, I'd hate to be replaceable."

Luna laughed as the three of them took seats on the large comfy chesterfield that had appeared in the middle of the room for them. There was also a coffee table filled with chocolates and crisps and dip and bottles of butterbeer. It was the perfect set up for a night of girl talk.

"So?" Luna asked in her normal voice, which always surprised Ginny, how Luna was so normal around them but always so dreamy and odd around others. "What's up?"

Ginny laughed. "I have so much to say I don't even know where to start!"

Demelza grinned. "Well, personally I think that you should tell us about New York."

Ginny grinned. "Okay, well it's amazing! The buildings are so high they look like they can touch the sky and people move there so quickly. No one seems to have time to take a walk in the park. Everything is so fast paced. It was a great city. Remember how I said that on my first day we went shopping?" When they nodded she continued. "Well, I got my bellybutton pierced." She lifted up her shirt to show them.

Demelza smiled. "Wow, it's so pretty."

Luna smiled. "I bet Harry thinks it's sexy."

Ginny laughed. "He does. I got a tattoo as well."

Luna's mouth dropped open. "No way!"

Ginny nodded. She hiked up her skirt to show them where the Horntail rested on her thigh. "You can't tell anyone about the tattoo. Harry hasn't even seen it yet. I'm waiting for the right moment."

Demelza laughed. "When you're about to make love and he sees this dragon on your thigh?"

Ginny grinned. "Maybe. But I think I'll show him before that happens."

Luna grinned. "He's really going to like that. What possessed you to get a tattoo?"

She shrugged. "Nothing really, it was Emma's idea and at first I didn't want to but then I thought about how Harry would react when he saw it and I just knew that I wanted it."

"Wow," Demelza replied.

Ginny laughed. "Yeah. So I know that I told you all about what I was learning in my letters, magic wise, but I learnt a lot." She demonstrated with her hand and made some pillows and then Demelza float.

"Wicked!" Demelza exclaimed as she was placed back down on the chesterfield. "You can do wandless magic!"

She nodded. "Yeah and so much other stuff. Emma taught me more than just magic though, she taught me about life. We had a few serious discussions on boys and sex and things that my mother would never tell me in a million years! Well, maybe after I was married with ten kids."

“What kind of things?” Luna asked.

Ginny chewed her bottom lip, grinning. “Things I never really thought of before. You see, as an empath I feel things more intensely than a normal person would. That includes happiness and sadness and pain and arousal, which plays a big part in my relationship with Harry.”

Luna grinned wickedly. “The pain or the arousal?”

“Luna!” Ginny exclaimed.

Luna shrugged. “I was just asking.”

“So anyway, because I feel things, more intensely, we had to talk a lot about stuff. It’s really intense too, when Harry kisses me, it’s like I lose control over myself. I just want to touch him and have him touch me and never stop. I shared my magic with him.”

“Shared your magic?” Demelza asked. “How do you do that?”

“It’s complicated and most people can’t do it. Emma explained to me that to do it, one has to be really in love with the person their sharing it with and vice versa. We connected, I guess you can say. Holding hands and concentrating on our powers and it’s like we were feeding each other our powers. I could feel the power that runs through him and he could feel mine. Ever since then, we’ve been incredibly connected.”

“Connected?”

Ginny nodded. “I mean when he kisses me, I not only feel the intense emotions of the kiss, but I can also feel his power meeting with mine, almost mating with mine.”

“Wow,” Luna replied.

Demelza nodded. “Double wow. What does that mean?”

Ginny shrugged. “I’m not sure exactly, but I think that when it comes

down for us to take the next step, to make love, it's going to be incredibly powerful and I think it's going to connect us together even more."

"You said in one of your letters that you could talk to Harry telepathically? Will that be different?" Demelza asked.

"I don't think so. Emma says that I can talk to him telepathically because of his own magical powers. I can talk to anyone in their minds, but Harry is the only person I've ever had manage to answer me back. I imagine that skill will be stronger now that we've shared magic. I did find, though, that when we were touching, directly after we had shared magic, I moaned his name in my mind and I know he heard me. I never connected to his mind. I think that if we're touching or feeling an intense closeness with each other we might be more connected mentally." She explained.

Luna nodded. "Wow, this is really crazy."

Ginny nodded. "I know. There's something else too, something you can't tell anyone."

Luna smiled. "I promise."

Demelza nodded. "Me too."

Ginny grinned. "Well, I've been thinking for a bit that Harry and I have been together for eighteen months now and I'm not ready to take that next step into making love just yet. Sometimes I think my body is going to betray me, but I'm not ready and I know that Harry would never push me into doing anything like that."

Luna nodded. "Harry's not that type of person."

"Exactly. Well, I was talking to Emma about that and saying how sometimes I can feel his frustration with me not being ready but because he's such a gentlemen he doesn't complain or anything."

Luna's mouth dropped open. "You didn't!"

Ginny chewed her bottom lip nervously. "I did. I told him it was his Christmas present."

"What did she do?" Demelza asked.

Luna giggled and whispered it in her ear as Ginny blushed deeper.

"Ginny!"

Ginny blushed. "I wanted to."

"Okay, now we need details."

Ginny laughed. "I'm not going to give you too many details, it was a private moment."

Demelza rolled her eyes. "Just a few details."

Luna nodded. "If you give details I'll tell you about the time I did it with Morag."

"MacDougall?" Ginny asked. "When did this happen?"

"How did I not learn about this?" Demelza asked.

Luna shrugged, a small grin on her face. "We've kind of been secretly dating since last May."

Ginny goggled. "Luna! You wild woman!"

Luna laughed. "It happened just before Christmas."

"And you just ... really?"

She nodded. "No more details until I get a nice trade."

Ginny sighed. "You play dirty. Alright, what do you want to know?"

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While Ginny was in the Room of Requirement talking to her friends, Seamus made his way down into the common room. He couldn't sleep. He had spent the last four months trying to get Lavender to notice he was alive in more than a friendly way. They were friends, almost best friends and had been for years. But he wanted more and she never seemed to get that. He had never directly come out and said so, but he flirted with her enough. He sighed as he plopped himself down in one of the huge armchairs by the fire. He was tired and he wanted her, maybe he just wanted her too much.

He remembered when it had first started. He was thirteen years old and of course he had always thought that she was beautiful. That wavy blondish-brown hair that she wore shoulder-length and layered; those pretty hazel eyes; and he would have to be either blind or dead to not have a reaction to her very curvaceous body. Lavender Brown was especially known for her large breasts, he figured it might be slightly shallow of him, but he loved those a lot. Other than Mandy Brocklehurst, she was the talk of the school in that category. But that had hardly been the leading factor in making him fall in love with her. She was sweet and kind and maybe a bit ditzy from time to time, but it suited her.

He remembered in his third year, he had been standing at the bottom of the main staircase talking to Dean when he had heard her sweet voice. He turned to look up at her just as Peeves came flying down, knocking Lavender down the last five steps and pushing Parvati aside. She had landed right in Seamus' arms. It was at that moment when he had looked into her eyes that he had fallen in love. It was corny and something he was definitely not going to admit to anyone, but he had. Harry, Neville, Ron, and Dean knew that he fancied her but none of them knew the extent of it. But she never gave him a chance.

He sighed and dragged his fingers through his hair in frustration just as the portrait hole opened. He glanced over in surprise to see Lavender coming through it. He grinned at her.

"Hey Beautiful! Out for a late night stroll?"

Lavender glared at him. "That's none of your business."

He might have left it at that if he hadn't seen the sudden flash of hurt in her eyes. He jumped to his feet and grabbed her arm, ignoring her protests, and pulled her down onto the couch. "What happened?"

"Nothing."

He sighed. "Lave, we've been friends for how many years now? Tell me what's wrong?"

A small tear fell from her eyes. "Eddie Carmichael's a jerk!"

Seamus grinned when she threw herself into his arms so that he could hold her close. He ran his hands up and down her back. "I could have told you that. What did he do?"

She kept her face buried in his shoulder. "Well, we've sort of been dating for a while, well since before Christmas, and we're snogging right?" Seamus ignored the little clutch around his heart at those words. "And the stupid prat put his hand right up my skirt!"

"He what?" Seamus exploded. Just the thought of that stupid idiot even touching Lavender was bad enough.

Lavender nodded as she pulled back to look at him. "I jinxed him and he got all angry. He accused me of leading him on and then he told me I was a harlot! I'm not a harlot!"

"Shh," Seamus murmured, pulling her close again. "Of course you're not. Did he hurt you?"

She shook her head no as she wiped the tears from her eyes. "No, I'm so angry! I'm not ready for stuff like ... after everything that I've been ... err! What a jerk! I told him I wasn't ready to move our relationship any farther then kissing as we've technically only been together two weeks! But does he listen, no! Then he tells me that if he had known I was going to be such an irresponsible and immature crybaby he never would have asked me out! So I told him to piss off and to go, er well, the next thing I said wasn't very nice."

Seamus laughed and hugged her close. "Good that you told him off.

So you're more angry than anything."

She nodded. "Yes. I can't believe he called me a tramp though? Can you believe that?"

He smiled. "He wasn't worthy of you."

She smiled and hugged him close and kissed his cheek before getting up. "Oh, you're such a sweetie, Seamus, what would I do without you?"

He sighed as he watched her head upstairs. He was going to be stuck in the 'friend' category for the rest of his life.

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Ginny sat in Dumbledore's office the next morning. McGonagall had asked her to go there straight away as some things needed to be discussed involving her missing so much school. She stood up and smiled warmly at the sound of her headmaster entering the room.

"Good morning, Miss Weasley, how are you this morning?"  
Dumbledore asked before he took a seat behind his desk.

Ginny grinned. "Good morning, sir, I'm just fine."

Dumbledore smiled. "Good, good. So, as you know, we have a few things to discuss involving the work you missed. So to begin, your timetable will be a bit full due to some tutoring lessons."

Ginny nodded. "Alright." She accepted the parchment that Dumbledore offered her.

**Monday:**

**9:00-10:20 — Transfiguration with Professor McGonagall**

**10:30-12:20 — Charms with Professor Flitwick**

**Lunch**

**13:30-14:50 — Defense Against the Dark Arts with Professor S. Black**

**15:00-15:50 — Ancient Runes with Professor A. Black**

**Dinner**

**19:00-19:50 — Transfiguration tutoring with Professor McGonagall**

**20:00-21:00 — Charms tutoring with Professor Flitwick**

**Tuesday:**

**9:00-10:20 — Care of Magical Creatures with Professor Hagrid**

**10:30-12:20 — Potions with Professor Snape**

**Lunch**

**13:30-14:50 — Muggle Studies with Professor Swift**

**15:00-15:50 — History of Magic with Professor Binns**

**Dinner**

**19:00-21:00 — Defense Against the Dark Arts tutoring with Professor S. Black**

**Wednesday:**

**9:00-10:20 — Astronomy and Astrology with Professor Sinistra**

**10:30-12:20 — Herbology with Professor Sprout**

**Lunch**

**13:30-14:50 — Defense Against the Dark Arts with Professor S. Black**

**15:00-15:50 — Arithmancy with Professor Vector**

**Dinner**

**19:00-19:50 — Care of Magical Creatures tutoring with Professor Hagrid**

**20:00-21:00 — Ancient Runes tutoring with Professor A. Black**

**Thursday:**

**9:00-11:20 — Transfiguration with Professor McGonagall**

**11:30-12:20 — Charms with Professor Flitwick**

**Lunch**

**13:30-15:20 — Potions with Professor Snape**

**15:30-16:20 — History of Magic with Professor Binns**

**Dinner**

**19:00-21:00 — Potions tutoring with Professor Snape**

**Friday:**

**9:00-10:20 — Herbology with Professor Sprout**

**10:30-12:20 — Ancient Runes with Professor A. Black**

**Lunch**

**13:30-14:50 — Defense Against the Dark Arts with Professor S. Black**

**15:00-16:00 — Free period**

**Dinner**

**19:00-21:00 — Herbology tutoring with Professor Sprout**

“Well, is it alright?” Dumbledore asked.

Ginny smiled. “It seems alright. What am I doing for the classes that I don’t have tutoring in?”

Dumbledore smiled. “There you will need to get notes and help from other students or speak to the professors about any problems that you might have. I have great faith in your abilities, Miss Weasley. You will only have to go to these tutoring classes until the professor thinks it is fit. But with your skills and your genius I believe that within the month you should be well caught up. Do you have any questions?”

She shook her head. “No I think everything is good. Thank you, Professor.”

“Not a problem, my dear. Now before you leave do you mind me asking what you thought of your trip or dare I say adventure?”

Ginny grinned. “It was very interesting. I learned a lot of stuff and I’m very happy that Bill and Charlie sort of forced me to go. I never got to tell you before either but I appreciate what you’re doing for me and what you did in order for me to go away and study with Emma Stanton. Thank you.”

Dumbledore smiled, his blue eyes twinkling. “I enjoyed it. It’s not very often one happens to have the skill and power of an empath under his own roof. I hope the powers you have learned will come in handy especially with dark times looming ahead.”

She nodded. “I do as well.”

“Good, you may go, Miss Weasley.”

Ginny nodded and left the office. She felt like Dumbledore had a lot of

faith in her. It made her feel good inside to think that. She glanced down at her schedule again and grinned. She had so many classes with Sirius; she wondered how interesting they were going to be. She met Harry in the Great Hall and grinned, leaning over to kiss him softly.

“Hey, what did Dumbledore have to say?”

She shrugged. “Nothing much. I’ve got lots of tutoring assigned from different professors to help me get back into the game. I’m going to be very busy.”

Harry grinned. “I’ll make sure you have good healthy breaks in between.”

She laughed. “I’m counting on it.”

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## Chapter 71: Lies and Confrontations

**Author's Notes:** thanks to saz for her help with this one! plz review

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### Chapter LXXI — Lies and Confrontations

#### **HARRY POTTER TELLS ALL ABOUT HE WHO MUST NOT BE NAMED:**

Written by: *Greg Henderson*

*Reporters crowded around King’s Cross Station and onto Platform 9 and 3/4s yesterday to try and catch Harry Potter before he climbed back onto the train to take him to school. With the rumours circulating about Mr. Potter’s many surprises, reporters had many questions for him. We finally got a response on the battle that took place last June involving Potter and some of his friends from school including Neville Longbottom, Ronald Weasley, Luna Lovegood, Hermione Granger, and Ginny Weasley at the Department of Mysteries in the Ministry of*

*Magic.*

*Now Mr. Potter did not have much to say on the battle itself but he did have some interesting news for the public. What is about to be written is extremely dangerous information about You-Know-Who. When asked about the battle, Mr. Potter responded angrily.*

*“First of all his name is (BEEP)! Learn to say the name! Fear of the name only increases fear of the thing itself! Second of all, he’s a blood thirsty psycho killing maniac, what more do you want to know?”*

*The braveness of that statement alone tells the people that Mr. Potter is to be feared. It is one of the many reasons why The Boy Who Lived is still praised for his triumphant defeat over He Who Must Not Be Named fifteen years ago. The return of You-Know-Who has caused terror to fill the wizarding world but knowing that the young hero does not fear his name as we commoners do brings joy to the hearts of all of us.*

*Mr. Potter did, however, share one tidbit of information that not only allows for us to get rid of the whole “He Who Must Not Be Named” and “You-Know-Who” fiasco, but a way that might make You-Know-Who very angry. The reporters here at the Daily Prophet are unsure as to what to make of it.*

*Sidney Daniels, a reporter for the Evening Prophet questioned Mr. Potter again on You-Know-Who.*

*“Mr. Potter, what do you think of He Who Must Not Be Named and his his idea of limpieza de sangre? Is it true the Dolores Umbridge spoke of this purifying of the wizarding world, with you last year?”*

*Mr. Potter replied to the question with almost a laugh in his voice. “Dolores Umbitch, sorry, Umbridge, is a fool and purifying the wizarding world? Don’t you think that limpieza de sangre is a little bold on old Riddle’s part considering that he’s a half-blood himself? By and by — Riddle is (BEEP).”*

*Riddle? One might ask, who is that? Apparently, the evil wizard the world knows as You-Know-Who is as normal as you or I (well, except*

*for being disturbed and dangerous). Miss Ginny Weasley, the girlfriend of Harry Potter, was asked about the name as well. She responded in frustration and her voice came out short.*

*“I think that Harry has a point. Tom Riddle is nothing more than a half-blood who thinks he’s better than everyone else. Blood is not important whether you’re pureblood, half-blood, muggleborn — who cares? It only makes him more of a prat because he does care!”*

*When asked why Tom Riddle is the name constantly used, Mr. Potter answered.*

*“Because it’s his name. Lord (BEEP) is a nickname that causes fear in people’s hearts so I think that everyone should call him by his given name. Tom Marvolo Riddle.”*

*Tom Marvolo Riddle is the man behind the fearful name of Lord You-Know-Who. Some searching and questions behind the name informed us that Miss Weasley was not telling lies, Mr. Riddle is indeed a half-blood wizard yet he believes in the pureblood ideology. Does this make sense? Most people would say no and that he is being a racist of not only himself but of most of the wizarding community. New steps will have to be taken to ensure the safety of our loved ones from Tom Riddle.*

## **LILY POTTER IS ALIVE!**

*Written by: Emmeline Dalton*

*Lady Lily Rose Potter, the wife of Lord James Andrew Potter, was thought to be dead. Everyone knows the story of the Boy Who Lived and how it was his mother who died for her son on that fateful Halloween night so many years ago. She died mentally that is and survived for four long years in terrible agony before finally passing away. However, Healer Dolan, one of the best healers when it comes to neurology came to Witch Weekly after Christmas with some rather incredible news.*

*Lily Potter is alive!*

*That’s right, Lord Potter made sure that the world believed she was*



*dead while he placed her in a high top and extremely expensive facility in St. Mungo's where she would be placed under the best possible care. Healer Dolan is head of the department for such permanent lodgings at St. Mungo's.*

*"Lady Potter was in serious distress when she arrived there," Healer Dolan told Witch Weekly reporters. "She had physically been broken but healers had helped her over the years until her physical being was back to normal. It was her mind that was such a disaster. You-Know-Who had used one of the Unforgivables on her during his torturing, the Cruciatus to be the most exact. It broke her mind in ways that seemed to be beyond repair. Her memory was lost almost completely. She didn't know anything about herself, her family, her husband or her child let alone the wizarding world. She was lost. Eventually, it all just became too much for her and she slipped into a coma. I told the Duke that there was next to no chance that she would ever awake from such a thing but he refused to listen to reason. He came almost every day at first and then only a few times a week as he was busy with his young son. Her condition never changed. Then the day before Christmas Eve, she woke up. It was nothing short of a miracle."*

*A miracle is exactly what happened. The thirty-four-year-old-Duchess looked wonderful at the train station seeing her sixteen-year-old-son Harry Potter head back to school after the holidays. Her auburn hair was just as beautiful as ever and her green eyes, so much like her son's, were shining. She looked like she was well and like she had been getting proper treatment since her recovery.*

*But Lady Lily Potter's life was kept from more than the public. Her own son thought that she was dead.*

*When questioning Lord Potter on such a thing he didn't respond but Harry had an answer.*

*"Okay, yes my mum is alive and no I didn't know! I was angry at first but I've accepted it as something that I would have done had I been in my father's position. I understand why he did it. I was angry at first but I get it now."*

*Can you imagine what that poor boy must have gone through learning that his mother was alive the entire time and that his own father never told him? Harry Potter is suffering inside because of such a thing. He's obviously only insisting that he is alright with it as he doesn't want to ruin his family's reputation. But with Lily Potter being alive after all these years it will change a lot. The new Minister of Magic will make sure of it.*

*Rufus Scrimgeour filled in as the minister until a new one was elected and he won the seat in the next election. When Minister Scrimgeour was informed of Lily Potter being alive, he had quite a comment.*

*"I think it's the best damn thing to happen to Auror Potter! He's lived a hard life and having his wife back is what he needs! I'm just hoping that now he'll show up to more of those ministry fundraisers and events that he's avoided for years because his wife was gone. We could use the likes the Duke and Duchess of Draíochta around."*

*Let's just hope that Lily Potter's untimely resurrection will benefit more than the minister's parties.*

## **POTTER'S GIRLFRIEND TURNS TRAMP!**

Written by: *Kelly Bray*

*Ginevra Weasley, the only daughter of muggle-loving Arthur Weasley, head of the Misuse of Muggle Artifacts Department, is currently the love interest of Harry J. Potter. Miss Weasley recently returned from a trip to America where it is found that she was more than unfaithful to the supposed love of her life.*

*Coincidence or not that Viktor Krum, international Quidditch star, was in New York City at the same time. Fredericka Wilson claims that she saw the two of them together on more than one occasion.*

*"The first time I thought my eyes were deceiving me! I mean, a sweet girl like that wouldn't cheat on her boyfriend and the stuff I caught them doing! My oh my, it was inappropriate! And in a public place at that! The dress that she was wearing was practically nothing and covered less than that! The way her lips were locked to Krum's, well I couldn't believe what I was seeing! But I'd recognize Ginny Weasley*

*anywhere!"*

*It seems that Potter and Krum are not enough for this high-bred redhead. Jonathon Patterson, head singer of the band Lucky Potion, had a bit of Miss Weasley as well. They were seen snogging in a muggle club downtown New York City. Diane King comments.*

*"When I saw the way that that little tramp was crawling over him like some type of ... of vixen, my heart just broke for the poor boy! After everything that Harry Potter's been through, the last thing that he needs is for his girlfriend to be tramping her way through men like a tart! The way that she was crawling over that musician makes me wonder just how experienced she is! For one so young, she sure seemed to know what she was doing!"*

*When questioned about the affairs, Miss Weasley denied them as did Mr. Potter. With the rumours of Miss Weasley being pregnant going around it makes one wonder exactly who the father of the baby is. However, pregnancy rumours have been denied. Let's just hope that Mr. Potter learns of her unfaithfulness before he gets hurt. After all, there are lots of ladies out there willing to give him a turn.*

"This is all the biggest pile of bullshit that I've ever read in my life!" Harry exclaimed angrily as he tossed the articles down onto the table.

Hermione sighed. "I told you not to read them. James did warn you though that the reporters would probably twist most of what you said."

Ron nodded. "But at least they told everyone Tom Riddle is You-Know-Who."

"Voldemort," Harry hissed angrily at Ron.

Ron shrugged. "Well, it's true. I mean, that's something, right? If the world knows his name maybe it will limit the fear they have over him or something?"

"I guess so."

Ron grinned as he swallowed a huge bite of his breakfast. "By the

way, I love how when you were questioned about Umbridge you called her Umbitch and even better is that they printed that!"

Harry grinned. "Yeah, that was pretty good. But look at what they wrote about Ginny! None of that is true and they made my da out to be some crazy lying guy who doesn't care about my feelings. The minister's only comment was that he hopes my parents will show up at parties? I mean, what's that about!"

Hermione laughed. "Well, you did say that the Lord and Lady Potter thing required some attention and that even though your da hates it he probably still is responsible for many things at the ministry. I bet he just avoided going as much as possible."

"Yeah, I can see that happening. Still, this makes me so mad!" He sighed when he saw Ginny enter the Great Hall. "Just wait until she reads this!"

He watched as she was stopped on the way by Colin who was showing her something. Her eyes flashed dangerously before she stomped over to them. "Did you see what that bitch Bray wrote about me? And where did she get these witnesses? I don't even know anybody named Jonathon Patterson and I've never even met Viktor Krum!"

Harry shrugged and yanked her down into his lap for a long kiss, which succeeded in shutting her up. Her hands fisted in his hair and she grinned at him when he pulled back.

"What was that for?"

"I love you and I don't think that you cheated on me, I know you didn't."

She laughed and kissed him softly. "Thanks."

Ron rolled his eyes at them. "Do you two always have to do that? I don't remember the two of you being so lovey dovey before?"

Harry grinned. "That's just because you blocked it from your mind."

Ron nodded and got a look of consideration on his face. "Probably."

Ginny laughed and kissed Harry again before she hopped off his lap. "Well, I've got to head to class. I'll talk to you guys later."

Harry watched her go with a grin on his face and Hermione sighed. "You two are great together, you know?"

"I know. I missed her more than anything."

Ron nodded. "We noticed, mate. You were a might miserable from time to time."

Harry grinned. "Can't help it. She makes me happy."

Hermione smiled. "It's nice to be happy." She slipped her hand into Ron's and Harry grinned.

"Speaking of happy, did I ever mention how incredibly happy I am that the two of you are FINALLY together?"

Ron's ears reddened at the tips. "We were just ... we were waiting for the right moment."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "The right moment! Merlin Ronald! If you had taken any longer I was going to kill you!"

Ron shrugged. "Hey, you could have done something too, you know!"

"Yeah right! And have you get your back up against the wall for it! I can just see it! You would have gone completely crazy over the fact that I asked you out first because I was a woman!"

"I would not! Two can play the game, Hermione!"

Harry held his hands between them. "I had hoped that once you were snogging, this would stop."

"What?" Ron and Hermione replied together, a look of bewilderment

on their faces.

Harry sighed and shook his head. "Never mind."

Hermione finished up her juice before she swung her book bag onto her shoulder. "Well, I'm off to Arithmency; I'll talk to you guys later." She went to walk off and Ron grabbed her hand, yanking her down to him.

He grinned at her. "Without kissing me goodbye?"

Hermione blushed as he kissed her softly.

"See you later."

She nodded and headed off.

Harry grinned. "I'm really happy for you guys."

Ron grinned. "I know and I know that I was a prat about her, but what can I say? I'm dimwitted."

Harry snorted. "You can say that again! Anyway, let's head to class."

Ron nodded and stood up. They were halfway down the path to Hagrid's cabin when they heard the shouts. "What do you suppose is going on down there?"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know. Let's go find out."

They broke into a run as they headed in the opposite direction to where a large group of people were forming. At first Harry couldn't make out what they were saying but then the chant grew louder.

**"FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT!"**

Harry and Ron pushed their way closer through the crowd and were surprised to find Seamus there, somewhat. Seamus was pretty good at getting involved in fist fights. It was the Irish in him. His opponent was a seventh year Ravenclaw that Harry recognized as Eddie

Carmichael. Seamus towered over him at 6'2 where Carmichael was only around 5'10 but Carmichael was definitely holding his own. Seamus' lip was bleeding and he had the beginning of a black eye. But Carmichael looked the worse for wear. His nose was broken and gushing blood everywhere. He had the beginnings of two black eyes and Harry could only wince as Seamus delivered a fist to his gut.

The crowd cheered as Carmichael plowed a fist into Seamus' shoulder and Seamus returned it by a knee to the groin. Carmichael keeled over and Seamus spit on him.

"That'll teach you to think with your balls!"

Harry and Ron grabbed Seamus and yanked him away from Carmichael who was holding a hand over his privates and practically in tears.

"Get that crazy son of a bitch away from me!" He yelled as he moaned out in pain.

Seamus made a move to jump him again and Ron and Harry had to hold him tighter.

"Seamus! Leave it, mate, he's broken!" Harry exclaimed.

This seemed to get Seamus' attention. He wiped blood off his mouth with the back of his hand. "Not enough."

The crowd started parting at that moment as McGonagall marched through. "What is the meaning of this? Mr. Carmichael, stand up! Mr. Potter, Mr. Weasley, let go of Mr. Finnegan!"

Harry and Ron let go of his arms.

"What is the meaning of this? Muggle dueling before class? That is highly unacceptable behaviour! I want all four of you to follow me to my office immediately!"

Harry sighed and leaned over to whisper to Ron. "Great, we try to prevent Seamus from killing somebody and we get caught."

Ron shrugged. "Not the first time."

Harry laughed as they followed McGonagall up to her office. Once the four of them were sitting across from her, Carmichael was still wincing whenever he moved, McGonagall spoke up.

"Well, are any of you going to explain what happened out there?"

Carmichael glared at her. "That crazy son of a bitch Finnegan jumped me!"

"Mr. Carmichael, watch your language! Twenty points from Ravenclaw!" She let out a huff of breath before she turned to turn her narrowing eyes at Seamus. "Is that true, Mr. Finnegan?"

Seamus shrugged. "I didn't jump him right away. I talked to him first."

McGonagall sighed. "Fifty points from Gryffindor for disrespectful behaviour, Mr. Finnegan! It is not appropriate for fighting to take place, whether your wand was used or not. Do I make myself clear?"

Seamus nodded. "Yes, Professor."

"Good. Mr. Carmichael, you may have been defending yourself but twenty points from Ravenclaw anyway as you were still fighting. Both of you will have a month's worth of detentions with me! I haven't seen such horrible behaviour in years! You are dismissed. Though I suggest that both of you make a trip to the hospital wing." Harry and Ron went to stand up and McGonagall's eyebrow rose. "Not you, Mr. Potter, or you, Mr. Weasley. Sit back down." Once Seamus and Carmichael had left the room she turned to them. "Mr. Weasley, why don't you tell me just exactly where you and Mr. Potter fit in?"

Ron gulped. "Well, you see, Professor, Harry and I were on our way to class and we heard some shouting. So we moved towards the sound and we could see Seamus and Carmichael fighting."

Harry nodded. "And after Seamus had kicked Carmichael in the back, he was hurt so we grabbed Seamus."



“To prevent him from doing any more damage.” Ron replied. “Then you showed up.”

McGonagall sighed as she looked at the carefully. She had a look on her face as if she was wondering whether to believe them or not. “Ten points to each of you then. Now go make sure that Mr. Finnegan is on his way to the hospital wing. I’ll inform Hagrid why you missed his class.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks, Professor.”

She smiled. “Just go. Oh, and Mr. Potter?”

Harry turned to look at her. “Yes, Professor?”

“I just wanted to say that ... well, Lily was a wonderful student. I’m glad that she’s got a second chance.”

Harry grinned. “Me too. Thanks, Professor.”

He left her office with Ron as Ron spoke up.

“What do you think Seamus’ problem was? I mean, mate, he was really beating on Carmichael?”

Harry shrugged. “No idea. But I think we should ask him. He looked ready to kill someone. I mean, hell I’ve seen Seamus get his Irish up, but that was crazy! Something must have happened.”

Ron nodded. “I agree.”

“Look, why don’t you head up to the dorm to see if Seamus is there and I’ll check the hospital wing. We have to find him and find out what the hell happened!”

“Good plan.” Ron watched Harry hurry off towards the hospital wing and he turned the other way.

Ron wondered what it was that had set his friend off. The only time

he had ever seen Seamus get angry was in third year when Lavender had been dating that prat Wayne Hopkins from Hufflepuff and he had cheated on her with Meghan Jones. Seamus had flipped and almost gone after him if Harry, Ron, and Dean hadn't stopped him. He had wanted to beat the guy to a bloody pulp. And it was hard work to try to defuse Seamus' anger. When he wanted to fight, he wanted to fight and nothing stopped him except Lavender. Ron never could get over the way that Seamus turned to absolute mush when Lavender was around. All she had to do was ask him to stop and he did, just like that. He wondered if Lavender had been involved with Carmichael because he figured that would explain a lot.

He pushed open the dormitory door and grinned when he saw Seamus lying on the bed and staring up at the ceiling.

"Hey, mate, how's it going?" Ron asked as he closed the door behind him and then took a seat on Dean's bed.

Seamus didn't even look over. "I don't want to talk about it, Ron."

Ron shrugged. "Well, I've got time. It's not like I actually want to go to class or anything."

After two minutes of silence, Seamus turned to glare at Ron. "Will you just go away?"

"Nope. After that beating, I'd like to know what the hell set you off, mate."

Seamus sat up and angrily fisted his hands in his hair. "Carmichael's a jerk and he deserved a bigger beating than that! Or hell, maybe I should have just hexed off his bits, it would serve the bloody bastard right!"

Ron looked at his friend now. "Mate, what did Carmichael do? I mean, I don't even know the bloke, except by reputation. I heard he's a bit of a womanizer — uses them and leaves them. But other than that he seems like an okay bloke."

"That sodding bloke tried to force Lavender into doing something that

she wasn't ready for! And when she said no he shoved his hand up her skirt! I'm going to bloody kill him!" Seamus exploded, standing up to begin pacing the room, his anger obviously back on full.

Ron sighed. "Listen Seamus, I know you like Lavender, even fancy her a bit and all, but really, don't you think that you might be taking this a bit too far?"

"Too far? How can I bloody take it too far? He hurt her, Ron! He hurt her! Maybe it was only her pride, but he still hurt her!"

"Seamus! I know you like Lavender but this has got to stop!" Ron exclaimed as he watched his friend pace back and forth.

Seamus sighed and sat back down on his bed, his hands fisted back in his hair. "How did you do it?"

"Do what?" Ron asked, slightly confused but pleased to see his friend's temper taking a bit of a downer.

"How did you go every day as her best friend and not go crazy?"

"Who?"

Seamus groaned. "Hermione, you dumb prat! Where the hell have you been? You've been best friends with her for years! And you've liked her for years, how did you manage it?"

Ron sighed. "Hell, I don't know. She was ... she is amazing and I guess I just thought she'd never like me back so there was no point in it. I was jealous of Krum and there was brief possibility of Goldstein at some point and I don't even want to know if that happened but ... I think I was more afraid of that if I told her about how I felt that she would laugh in my face."

Seamus snorted. "Right! She was just as crazy about you and the way you two would bicker! Hell, you still fight like cats and dogs!"

Ron grinned. "Yeah, I guess we do. I like fighting with her though. She's so damn beautiful when she's angry. Her eyes fire up and get

this dark grey, you can almost see a storm in there, and her face gets all flushed. I want her so bad when she's angry, probably the reason I picked so many fights with her in the first place."

"Yeah, I bet it would be." He sighed. "I just don't know what to do anymore, Ron. I'm a friend to her, a best guy friend. I'm there for her when she needs a shoulder to cry on; to vent her anger; hell, I flirt with her twenty-four/seven and she just smiles or tells me to go away! I've always thought my flirting was affective! Damn, it helped me get Lisa Turpin in bed and well, Padma Patil too and I've always had good relationships with them! But when I was flirting with them, they flirted back! Lavender just ... she doesn't even see me!"

Ron nodded. "I know, mate. It's different between you two then it was between me and Hermione. Hermione fancied me too. Lavender doesn't think of you that way."

Seamus groaned and buried his face in his hands. "Ron, I ... I love her. I love her so much it hurts. Every time I see her my heart just swells in my chest, I can feel it. I've been in love with Lavender since third year when she tumbled down the staircase into my arms. But I think unlike you, I'm going to be a friend for the rest of my life."

"Mate, I don't know what to tell you."

They both looked up when Harry entered the dorm. "Ah, I see you found him."

Ron nodded. "Harry, how did you and Gin get past the friend thing and into the whole ... other ... thing?"

Harry's eyebrow rose questioningly. "I wanted her and one day I just kissed her."

Seamus looked up at Harry and grinned. "I could do that!"

"Wow, wow, wow, do what?" Harry asked. "Damn Seamus, are you still going on about this Lavender thing?"

Ron nodded. "See Carmichael and Lavender were dating,

Carmichael hurt Lavender, Seamus beat the crap out of Carmichael, and now he's looking for advice on how to get out of the friend category. I got nothing. Hermione and I may have ended up together on a prank, but it was definitely something that was waiting to happen!"

Harry snorted. "More then waiting to happen! I thought it was never going to happen!" When Ron rolled his eyes, Harry shrugged. "No offence, mate, but you were pretty slow and every time I mentioned it you denied it. Anyway, Seamus, you and Lavender. My only piece of advice is that you have got to come clean!"

Seamus paled. "Come clean?"

Harry nodded. "You have to tell her how you feel. She's never going to know otherwise. It might give her some idea as to what she feels towards you."

Seamus shook his head. "I don't know if I could. I don't know how I would deal if I found out that she loved me as just as friend. Not only would I have made a complete arse of myself but our friendship would be strained."

Harry sighed. "Well, it's up to you, but I think that you have to do something. You can't keep your feelings hidden any longer."

Seamus nodded and then he grinned. "What if I pretend I'm drunk and I kiss her and then I see if I feel anything or she feels anything and since I'll be drunk it can all be an honest mistake?"

Harry's left eyebrow rose. "Why do you have to be drunk?"

"So it doesn't ruin anything but can be seen as a joke if it doesn't work out." He explained.

Ron shrugged. "Sounds okay to me."

Harry sighed. "That is hardly a plan. You have to tell her how you feel."

Seamus groaned and buried his face in his hands again. "What will that do? Except possibly make her hate me!"

"I don't know but it's the only way that you can ... wait! I got it! I got the perfect idea!" Harry replied, rubbing his hands together. He couldn't believe that he had actually thought about it on his own.

"What?" Seamus asked eagerly.

Harry grinned. "You've got to woo her. Okay listen up, I've got the perfect plan."

\*\*\*\*\*

Later on that evening, Harry sat in the common room with Ginny curled up in his lap. He watched Seamus from across the room, wondering if he was going to do what he had suggested. He thought that it was the perfect plan and the perfect way for him to see what Lavender really thought of him. He kept his arms wrapped tightly around Ginny's waist as she did her homework. He leaned down to nuzzle her neck gently.

"Harry," she murmured, pushing his head away.

He grinned and placed a small kiss on the back of her neck as he played with the long braid. "But I think it's time for a break."

She laughed and leaned back against him, turning her head to kiss him softly. "Mmm, nice try, but you just conned me into a break ten minutes ago."

"Uh-huh, I think it's time for another one."

"No. Harry I have a lot of work to do."

He sighed. "I know. Do you need help with anything?"

She shook her head. "No I got it. But if you keep distracting me, I am going to move off of your lap." She laughed when his arms tightened around her.

“Nuh-uh.”

Ginny turned to look at him and sighed. He was so bloody handsome. His hair was messier than usual which she knew were from her hands and his lips were still slightly swollen from hers. “Shh.”

He pouted. “But I love you.”

Ginny continued to write on the parchment. “I love you too, now shush.”

He sighed. “Fine, you win.” He was quiet for a few more minutes and then he grinned. “Hey Gin —”

“Harry! I’m trying to concentrate here!”

He grinned. “I know. I just thought I’d tell you that Colin came in. You said you needed to talk to him about something important.”

She smiled and turned in the chair to kiss him deeply. “I do. Thanks.”

She hopped off of his lap and left her homework with him before she made her way over to Colin. “Hey!”

Colin turned to look over and he grinned. “Hey, how are you?”

Ginny shrugged. “Good. Are you busy at the moment?”

“Homework, but that’s hardly important. What’s up?”

“I need to talk to you about something. Want to go for a walk?”

Colin glanced at her quizzically. “Sure.”

Once they left the common room, Ginny dragged him into an empty classroom and they took a seat.

“What’s going on, Ginny?” Colin asked.

She sighed. "Dee told me about a few things."

"Like what?"

"Like the fact that you are being way too overprotective of her!"

Colin's mouth dropped open. "What? Where would you get an idea like that?"

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Alright, listen, Colin! Dee told me that she found out about what you said to Geoff Hooper. She was interested in him and thinking about asking him out, what right did that give you to threaten him?"

Colin shrugged. "He's not good for her. He's bit conceited and he only ever thinks about himself. I heard that he can't even manage to get a girl in the first place. Dee has no business fancying a prat like that!"

"But what gives you the right to choose for her? It's her life and she should be able to go out with anyone she wants."

"Not if the guy is a prat!" Colin insisted. "And if I don't look out for her then who will, eh? Did you think about that, Ginny?"

"Why does she need someone to look out for her?" Ginny asked. "She's more than capable of taking care of herself."

Colin shook his head. "No, she's not! I'm just doing the same thing I did for you. Did I not always make sure that you were with guys that were worth your time too? Michael was alright, I didn't think he was the greatest bloke but I just told him to treat you right or I would kill him. Why can't I do the same with Dee?"

Ginny's mouth dropped open. "You said this to Michael? When?"

Colin grinned. "When you were dating him obviously."

"You're a prat, you know that! Dee is capable of taking care of herself, Colin. Now honestly, tell me the truth, why do you think that you're being so crazy over guys she likes? Do you like her?"



Colin rolled his eyes. "Of course I like her. I love her! Dee is my best friend next to you, I care about her and I don't want to see her get hurt!"

"So it's like a little sister thing?" Ginny asked, her heart breaking for her friend as she remembered what it was like to love someone who didn't notice you the way you wanted.

Colin nodded. "Of course it is."

Ginny sighed. "Colin, look, I know you care about her but you have to let her make her own decisions. Alright?"

"Fine, I didn't realize that she even knew about Hooper."

Ginny grinned. "Vicki let it slip I guess."

"Figures." He sighed. "Is she really angry with me?"

"No, she's frustrated with you. She has a good reason to be. I think that you should apologize to her and make her understand that you just care about her and don't want to see her get hurt." Ginny explained.

Colin shrugged. "Alright, I can do that. I'll try to be a bit more ... well, yeah."

Ginny grinned as she stood up. "Good. Because what I got out of that whole I'm trying to protect her thing was that you're jealous."

"Wh-wh-what?" Colin spluttered. "Jealous? Of Dee?"

"No, of the guys she fancies."

"That's ridiculous!" Colin exclaimed.

Ginny shrugged. "Well, it makes sense when you think about it. Telling guys off before she gets a chance with them; you come up with a reason about why she shouldn't date someone. To me, that

sounds like jealousy.”

Colin shook his head. “It’s not. That’s ridiculous! Dee is way too young and she’s ... she’s ... she’s like my best friend!”

Ginny smiled. “So? Harry was like my best friend. Ron was definitely Hermione’s best friend. And Dee is not too young, Colin, she’s only a year younger than you. What’s your point? Dee’s gorgeous!”

“Well, yeah, but I don’t look at her that way. I can’t look at her that way.”

Ginny grinned. The look on his face was priceless; his eyes had bugged out of his head and he looked slightly taken aback by the turn in the conversation. “It was just a thought. I’ll see you later.”

She left the room, leaving Colin wondering about what they had just talked about. She wondered if maybe it would make him start to look at her in the light that Demelza so wanted. She headed back to the common room whistling.

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Ron was grinning to himself as he walked through the halls, holding Hermione’s hand in his own. He had never imagined that this day would come. He had been in love with Hermione since at least fourth year, or at least that was when he had realized that he was in love with her. But he had a funny feeling that he had started falling for her the day she had plowed her fist into Malfoy’s face. Not that he would tell her such a thing.

Now the two of them were patrolling the hallways for their duties, mostly. Though Ron did admit that ever since they had got together she had been a bit lax in them. Hermione could be distracted very easily. To prove his point, Ron gently ran his thumb and forefinger over her hand. She gave him an odd look and he grinned before he yanked her into an empty classroom.

“Ron! We’re supposed to be patrolling the corridors!”

Ron grinned. "Well, I think this classroom needs some attention."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "That was the most ridiculous thing you've ever said! We really need to get back out there and — mmmph!"

He had yanked her towards him and covered her moving mouth with his own. She moved against him as if she was trying to pull away but he simply fisted his hands in her hair and he felt her surrender to the kiss. Nothing gave him more joy then the way that she just melted against him, giving her absolute surrender to him and to him alone. He pulled her closer and moaned when she wrapped her legs around his waist and he backed her up until she was pressed against the wall. His hands slid from her hair to her waist and he held her hips tightly as he devoured her lips.

She moaned against him, one hand clawing at his back and the other one fisted in his hair. She loved this about him. His spontaneity; she had never imagined Ron to be one to possess it, but it was great. He'd just grab her and kiss her at the most random times. Not that she minded, of course. She loved it. She ran her hands up and down his back, grinning when she slid her hands beneath his shirt to roam over the smooth skin on his back. Ron seemed to take this as a hint because his hands were pulling the blouse out from her kilt and slipping his hands beneath. She gasped at the touch.

His hands were rough and calloused from Quidditch and where it should have felt hard and uncomfortable it ignited fires in her. She pulled away from his lips to turn and suck gently on his ear. Ron moaned out loud and slid his hands up to cup her through her bra. She sighed and urged him to continue touching her. A loud coughing noise caused them to spring apart.

Draco was standing in the doorway. "Um, sorry to interrupt, but McGonagall wants to talk to all the prefects in her office."

Hermione ran a hand through her disheveled hair and sighed. "Alright."

She chewed her bottom lip for a moment and Ron grinned, leaning over to suck it into his mouth. "Yum."

“Stop it!” Hermione muttered.

Draco grinned. “Hey, Granger, just to help you out, you might want to button up that blouse and make yourself a bit more presentable. Same to you, Weasley.”

Hermione glanced down in surprise, wondering when exactly Ron had unbuttoned her blouse. Ron simply grinned at her. “I’ve got quick hands.”

She rolled her eyes and quickly buttoned herself up, her face red as she realized that Draco had obviously seen her lace bra. “Obviously.”

Once Ron and Hermione were a bit more presentable, they followed Draco down the hall to the office. “What’s this about?”

Draco shrugged. “No idea. Probably just a quick meeting or something.” He turned to grin at them. “Besides, it’s not like you two were actually working.”

Ron shrugged. “She gets distracted easily.”

Hermione smacked him in the arm. “I do not!”

“Whatever you say.”

Hermione rolled her eyes as she followed the two of them, wondering just how soon it would be until Ron’s hands could be on her again.

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Ginny’s tutoring classes were going pretty well. She was impressed with how much she had learnt in such a short amount of time. But she had to admit that the lessons with Snape were starting to eat at her. He was such a jerk and she figured that nothing much was going to be changing that any time soon. It was like class with the constant ridicule and critiquing of her work. But she figured that she could handle it, after all, she only had a few more potions to work on before he thought she was alright to continue with the regular class.

It was the lessons with Sirius that she enjoyed so much. It was her second lesson with him that evening and she planned to really give him a piece of her mind. How dare he hint about her tattoo to Harry when she had specifically told him that it was a secret? She was angry with him and planned to tell him so. She was just down the hall from his office when she heard someone call her name. She turned at the voice and groaned inwardly at the sight of Romilda Vane coming towards her.

"Can I help you?" She asked stiffly.

Romilda rolled her eyes. "If you kill yourself. Listen, I just wanted to tell you that Harry will see you for the tramp that you really are and when he does, I'm going to be waiting there for him with open arms."

Ginny sighed. "Alright, you'll be waiting a pretty long time."

"I don't know what the hell he sees in you!"

"You don't have to. Don't worry about it!"

Romilda gasped. "Don't worry about it? I deserve to be with him! He's mine! And one of these days I'm going to have him! Watch your back, bitch!"

She turned and stomped away angrily as Ginny watched her go. She turned to go into Sirius' office and groaned inwardly when she noticed Sirius standing there.

"Some show?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, well she wants Harry."

Sirius grinned. "Popular bloke."

Ginny shrugged. "These girls are really starting to piss me off! I mean, okay so they fancy him, do that have to try to get into his pants every damn minute of the day?"

Sirius laughed. "I think someone's a bit jealous."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Please, I trust Harry and I know that he would never cheat on me unless he was under a love potion or something but it's these girls! Why can't they leave him the hell alone? How much more can I do to prove that he's mine and mine alone!"

Sirius grinned. "You can always do a bit of a prank on them."

"A prank?" Ginny asked curiously.

Sirius nodded. "Yeah, a prank. Do something to prove that he's yours and yours alone. Like maybe have their true personalities come out at them like they will say to Harry whatever they are truly feeling. Or maybe if they brush by him you can have something appear on Harry like — property of Ginny Weasley, hands off!"

Ginny laughed. "It could appear on his bum! He'd kill me though."

Sirius wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "Or he'd just try to get you to show him what's on your thigh?"

"Speaking of that! How dare you mention that? I told you that it was a secret! You're lucky that I didn't bat bogey you!"

Sirius waved his finger in front of her. "Now, now, you can't hex a professor."

Ginny's eyes flared. "Watch me!"

Sirius paled. "Now Gorgeous, come on now, you don't mean that!"

She shrugged. "Okay, I'll make you a deal! You help me come up with a prank to get these girls to leave Harry alone and I won't hex you!"

Sirius sighed. "Alright, how do you want to start?"

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## Chapter 72: Some Problems and a Prank

**Author's Notes:** thanks to saz and kate for their help in this chapter!  
i dedicate it to both of them - they rock!  
plz review!

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## Chapter LXXII — Some Problems and a Prank

Three days after Seamus had beaten the crap out of Carmichael, he was ready to take the next step and to do what Harry had suggested. He was nervous about it and he didn't know if he was going to have the guts to do it and most of all he was nervous about how Lavender was going to react to it. He was the last one to crawl out of bed that Saturday morning and he stretched lazily before standing up. He yanked on a nearby pair of jeans over his boxers before he went to the bathroom to brush his teeth. He knew what he was going to do first, but he was so nervous about it. He wasn't even sure if he could go through with it. But the only thing that he knew was that he had to take the first step today or he knew that he would never do it and that he would be miserable for the rest of his life wondering what if.

He grinned at the thought and headed back into the dormitory. His grin widened when he saw the very person that he was thinking about sitting on his bed.

"Hey Beautiful!"

Lavender looked up at him as he walked into the room and her breath caught in her throat. She had never seen him without a shirt on before, and blimey was he built. She swallowed and pushed the thoughts aside, they were inappropriate for her to be feeling about such a good friend of hers. But how could she not admire the smooth skin and the broad shoulders. She gulped and looked up at him. "I need to talk to you."

Seamus nodded and grabbed a green shirt from the dresser. He pulled it over his head before he turned to her. "Alright, what's up?"

She took a deep breath and then she stood up and punched him in the arm.

“Ow! What was that for?”

“What the hell is wrong with you?” She demanded. “What on earth gave you the right to go after Eddie and beat the crap out of him like that?”

Seamus shrugged. “He deserved it.”

“Why?”

“Because he hurt you, Lave! Damn it and it pissed me off! He had no bloody right to touch you!”

Lavender’s mouth dropped open. “What gives you the right to decide his punishment? Who made you the one that’s supposed to fight my battles? I can fight my own damn battles, Seamus! Did I not hex him? I’m sorry I cried on your shoulder but I was pissed off! And if I tell you things in confidence like that I don’t expect you to go after the people who hurt me!”

“I know that! But I wanted to. As far as I know he doesn’t even know why I punched him.” He sighed and reached over to take her hand, sitting down next to her on the bed. “I care about you and I don’t want to see you get hurt. I know that you can take care of yourself but ... I just, I wanted to do something to hurt him back for ... for what he did to you.”

Lavender’s eyes fell down to his hands. His knuckles were scraped a bit and she knew that out of pride Seamus wouldn’t have allowed Madam Pomfrey to heal them. She lifted their joined hands and kissed his knuckles. “Thank you then. But I still think that you were a prat!”

He sighed and tried to ignore the way that her lips had felt against his skin. “The only important thing is that you’re not with that prat anymore!”



She grinned. "I guess yeah. I do understand why you went after him, what he did was ... well, more then inappropriate but it wasn't your concern alright? You can't always be around to protect me. I'm used to protecting myself." When he nodded she smiled. "Alright, onto other news, Justin asked me to go to Hogsmeade with him on Valentine's Day. I was so surprised. He's so shy."

Seamus gulped and tried to ignore the image that had suddenly appeared in his brain of him beating Finch-Fletchley into a bloody pulp. "Oh yeah?"

She smiled. "We should double date so that I can kick you under the table when you get out of line."

He managed a small smile. "Yeah maybe."

Lavender stood up and kissed his cheek. "Thanks for defending my honour. I'll see you later."

He watched her go and rubbed the ache over his heart. This was his only chance left. He grabbed a piece of parchment from his book bag and began to compose a letter. He just hoped that what he had planned worked.

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Draco was getting back into the swing of things at school as well, but his mind was elsewhere a great deal of the time. He felt so much better now that he had opened up to Harry and he liked knowing that he was there when he needed a friend to talk to. He was also very pleased with the idea of him no longer having to marry Pansy, of course he did have to find someone else in a little over a year, but that wasn't the point. He knew who he wanted but he knew that his chance there wasn't going to happen. *How could she ever learn to love him knowing that his father had done what he had to her own mother?*

As if on cue, Delilah made her way down the hall with her friend Mandy. He tried not to stare but it was hard when she was so

beautiful. Neither one of them even noticed him lurking in the doorway of an empty classroom.

“I don’t know, Mandy; it’s not really my kind of thing. Besides, I’m so not interested in Vince in any way. He’s a bully.” Delilah insisted as she fixed the bag on her shoulder.

Mandy pouted. “But Greg has this whole game thing and we really need you. I like Greg, so what if he’s a stupid baboon, he’s pretty hot naked.”

Delilah made gagging noises that caused Draco to grin. “Ew! Too much information! And no! I’m not double-dating! I’m not interested in Crabbe I’m sorry.”

Mandy sighed. “Fine! What if I can convince Greg to bring someone else along?”

Delilah rolled her eyes. “No.”

“It was worth a shot, you know.”

“I’m not saying that it wasn’t. Look, I’m not interested in guys at the moment, you know that!”

Mandy sighed. “You’ve got to get over him! Del, he wasn’t worthy of you in the least! Look how he treated you! He was a complete arse!”

“I know ... but ... I thought I loved him.”

“Jason was a jerk, Del! You knew that you didn’t love him and when he slapped you around like that well ... I’m surprised that you didn’t peel the skin from his bones!”

Delilah laughed. “I was too shocked I think. No one had ever hit me in my entire life. An argument is one thing, but ... I never knew that he had such violence in him.”

“Psh! Summer romances ... he was a jerk! Just be thankful that he doesn’t go here! He’s the last thing that you need.”

Delilah nodded. "Guys are the last thing that I need at the moment. Why add more fuel to the fire?"

"Fire?" Mandy asked, a bewildered look on her face and then she nodded. "Oh right! Pansy's a bitch so why bother getting bent out of shape about her!"

"Well, I'm going to get bent out of shape about it! I'm tired of her spreading vicious lies about me all over the school!" She exclaimed.

Mandy shrugged. "But most people know that they're lies, Del! I mean, you're obviously not a lesbian and you're not pregnant! And if she would just get it through her head that you're not trying to steal her fiancé I think it would all be much better!"

Delilah nodded. "You can say that again! It's not my fault if Malfoy fancies me is it?"

"Well, you are beautiful, Del; give the bloke a break there."

She blushed. "I guess. I mean, don't get me wrong, Draco's very handsome. I'm just not interested."

"Uh-huh," Mandy replied, a knowing look in her eyes. "Why aren't you interested again?"

Delilah rolled her eyes. "Come on, Mandy! He's like the golden prince. All that gorgeous hair and the beautiful blue eyes and the long-fingered hands that damn it, yes, I've imagined those hands on my skin but ... his family is horrible! How does one know that he's not the same? He came from the same mold?"

Mandy shrugged. "You can't know. He thinks you're gorgeous, why don't you give him a chance?"

"I just can't."

Mandy sighed. "Whatever, and you're too modest — you are beautiful and obviously Malfoy's noticed. Well, listen, if you refuse to double

date with me, looks like you'll be alone in Hogsmeade."

Delilah shrugged. "I probably won't even go. The last thing I need is for Pansy to see me in Hogsmeade on Valentine's Day without a date."

Mandy grinned. "And you think that she's going to have a date? Honestly Del, have you seen the way that Draco treats her? He hates her just as much as we do! Poor bloke is betrothed to her and not by choice!"

She smiled. "True." She grinned broadly. "Oh, I hope she's miserable!"

Mandy laughed. "That's my girl! Come on, we're going to be late for Transfiguration if we don't hurry!"

Delilah nodded. "Alright I'm coming."

Draco watched them hurry off and sighed. Well, at least she found him handsome right? He sighed; it wasn't nearly enough. They were right about one thing; Pansy was going to start pestering him soon. He hated Valentine's Day.

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As the weeks passed by, Ginny's tutoring classes had pretty much ended. She had completely wowed all of the professors, including Snape, though he would never admit it. She had only taken two weeks to catch up with everything as she and Emma had covered a large portion of it when going over her studies. She was now fully caught up and back in the normal rush of everyday homework.

McGonagall had been very impressed when Ginny had showed her the animagus forms. They had agreed to register the fox and leave the eagle as her own. McGonagall had definitely given quite a bit of praise, causing Ginny to blush as she knew that McGonagall was the kind to give it only if she was truly impressed. Ginny felt like the compliments had meant more to her knowing that.

But the thing that Ginny had been the most anxious to work on was the prank. Harry hadn't been lying when he had told her that the girls were going crazy, they were out of control. They bad mouthed Ginny; they grabbed Harry when he was walking through the halls, sometimes even pinched his bum. But Romilda Vane was definitely still the worst. Every where she turned, Romilda was there, flirting with Harry, touching his arm, smiling at him. Ginny trusted Harry with her life but she didn't trust Romilda as far as she could throw her. Harry was simply too nice to tell her off so between Ginny and Sirius and with a bit of help from Fred and George and surprisingly, Hermione, she had a good plan. Or, what she hoped turned out to be a good plan.

Basically, it was a mix of many things. Some of it affected Harry; some of it affected the girls who followed him; and a good chunk of it affected Romilda Vane. Sirius had helped her to prefect the last few plans and get the last few ends in order the night before. Fred and George's role had been particularly fun. They had this new invention — well, it was a potion actually, something that was not yet available to the public — but what it did was all you had to do was say the names of the people who you wanted the potion to affect and red smoke would rise up from the cauldron. The smoke would then sail out of the room and find the people whose names had been mentioned. The good part was that the smoke was invisible to everyone but the person or persons who made the potion.

Ginny just hoped that the potion did what the twins said it did; force the person to tell exactly what they thought and were feeling about the person they were talking to. But considering that she had threatened to send certain pictures to *Business Wizard*, they had cooperated fully and naturally the twins were more than happy to help out in any type of prank. Sirius had helped with the second part that had affected Harry and Ginny had the feeling that he enjoyed it entirely too much and she was pretty sure that he had something else up his sleeve that he wasn't telling her. Surprisingly, it was Hermione who helped her out with the final parts of getting Romilda back. Ginny was just anxious for the games to begin.

She was rewarded fairly soon as she and Harry were walking through the halls that Saturday afternoon hand in hand when a crowd of girls

headed towards them. They were giggling and whispering to each other as they shot flirtatious looks in Harry's direction. Ginny rolled her eyes and stopped Harry to kiss him softly.

He grinned at her. "I think that you enjoy doing that in front of those girls entirely too much."

Ginny pouted. "Alright, if you want me to stop then ...". She made a move to pull back and Harry yanked her back up against him.

"Oh no, I never said stop." He brought his lips back down to hers and she sighed in happiness. When he pulled back, her eyes were blurred in pleasure.

"Hmm, yum."

He grinned. "Yum indeed."

"Oh stop snogging already!" Ron exclaimed. "I don't want to hear yummy noises while thinking about you kissing my sister!"

Harry grinned broadly. "What, you want me to lie?"

Hermione rolled her eyes and took Ron's hand in hers. "Ron, leave them alone." Her eyes traveled over the crowd of girls and she grinned in amusement. "Hmm, interesting this crowd, eh, Ginny?"

Ginny grinned wickedly. "Thanks Hermione, I just hope it works."

"Hope what works?" Harry asked as he squeezed her hand gently in his.

But he didn't get to hear an answer because all four of them jolted when a yell broke out from the crowd.

"I WANT YOUR BODY, HARRY!"

Harry turned scarlet and Ginny tried to suppress a giggle. Ron's mouth dropped open in shock, though his eyebrow had risen in amusement and Hermione giggled. The games had begun. The girls

who followed Harry around like lost puppies would be screaming out what they really thought or felt all day. Fred and George really were brilliant. As if on cue, a blonde girl made the next declaration.

“HARRY, I ONLY WANT YOU BECAUSE YOU’RE THE BOY WHO LIVED!”

A brunette nodded fiercely next to her. “I WANT YOUR MONEY!”

“NO, I WANT HIS MONEY!”

“I WANT MY HANDS ON HIS BODY! HE DOESN’T DESERVE THAT TRAMP!”

The yells were pretty much all the same and then Ginny could only grin when Romilda Vane made her way to the forefront. She stared boldly ahead, her dark eyes glistening as she swung her long black hair over her shoulder. She stepped directly in front of Harry and ran her finger down his chest in a provocative way that made Ginny want to hex her.

“I want you, Harry. I want you so bad that I can taste it.”

Harry gulped and his face turned red. “But I ... I want Ginny’s body not yours.” He blushed when he realized what had come out of his mouth.

Ginny’s hand flew over her mouth to stifle a giggle. She had never imagined Harry would say anything like that. Then she gasped, no ... Sirius wouldn’t have, would he?

Ron’s mouth simply dropped open. “Harry! I don’t want to hear that about my sister!”

Another girl approached Harry and ran her hands along his arm. “I want you too; I’ll even share you if I have too.”

Harry’s face turned a darker shade of red. “Ginny ... I want Ginny, I don’t like you.” He seemed to realize that he couldn’t control what was coming out of his mouth and he glared at Ginny. But instead of

asking her what she had done he instead came out with. "Ginny, I want to kiss you and I want to see what's on your thigh."

"Potter! Do you want to die?" Ron demanded, ignoring Hermione who was keeping a strong hold on him with her arms wrapped comfortably around his waist and her head resting on his shoulder.

"It's a prank, Ron, now shush."

"Shush? Do you hear what he's saying?" Ron demanded.

Hermione shrugged. "And you never think of doing anything like that to me?"

Ron's mouth opened and then closed again. "Well, I ... that's beside the point."

She grinned. "Uh-huh, just watch."

Ron turned his attention back to Ginny who was giggling again as Romilda pushed her way through again. Sirius had obviously used the same potion on Harry; she was going to have a word with him.

"I want your body because let's face it you're gorgeous, and because hey you're famous! I want you because being with you would make all of the girls jealous because I finally landed the Boy Who Lived. Do you have any idea how popular I'll be if I'm shagging the boy wonder?" She asked as she grinned at him flirtatiously.

"But I don't like you. You're rude and ignorant and you're ... I don't want to bloody shag you! I want to shag Ginny!" He covered his hand with his mouth in shock and Ginny laughed.

Ron's grip tightened on Hermione's hand. "I don't want to hear that he wants to shag my sister!"

Hermione laughed. "Shh love."

Romilda shrugged. "I want you. I want to be, Mrs. Harry Potter, I want to be the Duchess. I want to be famous!"



As she spoke, her black hair began to turn lighter and lighter until it was almost white and so thin that her scalp could be seen. Her nose grew so large that it dominated her face and warts grew out of the nostrils. Across her chest in big bold letters and in shining flashing lights it said: *Hogwarts' Biggest Tramp* and on her back in the same fashion it read: *I'd Do Anything and Date Anyone for Money and Popularity*. Her teeth grew so large that they hung down over her chin and she shrieked loudly when she realized what was happening. She threw her hands over her face and ran out of the hallway in horrified tears.

The other girls continued to yell out about how much they only wanted Harry because of his fame, body, and money. Hermione grinned in amusement to Ginny and mouthed out that it had worked as she dragged Ron away. Ginny pulled Harry away and into a nearby classroom and when he turned around to try to overcome the sudden speaking problem he had Ginny burst into hysterical laughter.

"What is so funny?" Harry demanded. "You did this! I know you did, you little ... Merlin, I want to kiss you!"

She laughed harder. "Oh, Sirius is brilliant! Have I ever mentioned how much I love him?"

"He did this? Why I ought to ... cover your entire body with my lips." Harry demanded, obviously trying to overcome the potion that was making him speak what he wanted to do above everything.

Ginny continued to laugh even though her body was painfully aroused through the things that he was saying. But every time he turned around, she laughed harder. Sirius had used what he had mentioned to her in a half-hearted joke. On Harry's bum, written in bold white letters it read: *Property of G.W. — Hands Off!* "Harry, Merlin Harry, you're bum!"

"My what?" He asked, turning to try to see it. "What does it say?"

Ginny caught her breath and walked over to him, slipping her arms around his waist. She leaned over to kiss his ear gently. "It says on

your bum, 'Property of G.W. hands off.'

Harry grinned broadly. "Oh yeah? Well, at least it tells the truth. I don't want anyone's hands on me but yours."

She grinned. "Sirius did it, I know he did. I wonder how he did it though."

"I want to make love to you."

Ginny's eyes widened as they met his and she knew the potion was still making him say things but she hadn't expected those words. She placed her hand on his cheek. "I'm not quite ready for that yet."

He nodded. "I know you're not. I didn't mean to say that, I meant to, Ginny I want, put your mouth on me again. Damn it! How do you turn this thing off?"

She grinned and brought her lips to his throat. "You can't. It just sort of has to die off."

"How long?" He asked, his hands sliding up her back and into her hair.

She shrugged. "Could be hours yet."

"Well, that's the last thing we need! I need you to try to find a way for this to stop before I go and rip off your clothes!" He blushed. "I didn't mean to say that."

Ginny laughed. "Come on; let's go find somewhere quiet to be for a while."

He nodded and let her lead him out of the classroom. "Where are we going to go?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. But there's probably somewhere quiet in the castle."

He pulled her close to him and kissed her softly. "I know the perfect place. Come on. I'm going to ravish you." He winced and she giggled.

“Don’t worry about what’s coming out of your mouth, Harry. It’s only whatever you feel like doing above anything else.”

“Oh, that’s reassuring! So you know my darkest desires! Like that I want to see you naked. Damn it! Honestly, Gin, how do you turn this off?”

She smiled. “You can’t. It’s nice to know though that I’m the thing that you think about the most.”

She followed him into the Gryffindor common room, surprised to find the common room empty except for a few people. They went up to his dormitory and Harry opened his trunk. “In here.”

She watched in amazement as he turned the key and a staircase appeared when he opened the trunk. She stepped inside first and he followed, pulling the lid closed behind them and locking it.

“Harry, this is amazing!” Ginny exclaimed as she looked around the small kitchen.

He nodded. “I know. I’ve been meaning to take you down here but I never really found the right moment, you know? It’s good for snogging you senseless.”

She smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck. “It most certainly is. Harry, what do you want right now?”

“My Christmas present again.” He replied before he groaned and buried his face in her neck. “No, I didn’t mean ... damn it, why did you do this?”

Ginny giggled and kissed his lips softly. “I wanted you to say what you really felt to those girls. I didn’t think about how it would affect you otherwise. I’m sorry, but I must say, it’s very intriguing. I didn’t quite understand what it would do when Sirius mentioned it.” She kissed him again and then she slipped her hands under his shirt. “Harry?”

“Yeah?” He asked, his breath ragged as he gasped under her touch.

“I’m okay with giving you you’re present again.”

His eyes darkened when he looked at her. “Gin?”

She smiled and followed him into the bedroom. She pushed him down onto the bed and crawled over him, unsnapping his jeans in the process. “Harry?”

“Yeah?” He asked, his breath ragged as he reached up for her.

She placed a kiss on the skin just below his bellybutton. “I love you.”

He grinned and then he gasped at her touch, fisting his hands in her hair as she began to plant small kisses along his bare skin. “Love you too.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Monday morning, the girls who normally followed Harry around kept a much safer distance and especially made a point of almost leaving him alone. He could only grin as he remembered the prank. Romilda Vane had been particularly angry. Especially since the prank had lasted the entire weekend. Madam Pomfrey hadn’t been able to get rid of the warts or the aging and she had been horrified over her appearance. She also remembered everything that she had said to Harry and was so embarrassed that she stayed as far away as possible. Harry didn’t mind in the least, especially since the prank had ended with him enjoying a good afternoon with Ginny.

The first place he had gone on Sunday was to Sirius’ and Lexy’s suite to thank Sirius for the prank. Sirius had only grinned and said it wasn’t the only prank he had done. He had then become strangely closemouthed however, as Lexy wanted to know what he had done. The answer had come Monday morning when Snape had walked into the Great Hall dressed in a prom dress of hot pink and black lace bra overtop the dress. His high heeled shoes had lit up when he walked and his long hooked nose had been pierced with a huge glowing ring.

He had hardly been pleased.

Harry could only grin broadly as he had wondered why it had taken so long for Sirius to play a good prank on Snape. It looked like he had finally managed to find a way of tricking him. Lexy was trying not to laugh but Harry had seen the way she had hit Sirius in the arm and given him a small lecture as she laughed at the look Snape had managed.

In other good news, Seamus had finally started the plan that Harry had suggested. Monday morning, an owl flew into the Great Hall and landed in front of Lavender with a single red rose. She had gasped in surprise and when she read the note; her eyes had darted around questionably. Ginny had gotten up to find out what had happened. She sat back down next to Harry and grinned.

“Lavender has a secret admirer.”

“Oh yeah? What did the card say?” Harry asked, hoping that he sounded innocent.

Ginny sighed. “It was so sweet. It said: *I have never seen such beauty until I looked into your eyes. Love always, your Secret Admirer.* How sweet is that?”

Harry grinned. “Very sweet.” He had to give Seamus credit; he had never expected him to have any romance in him. He looked at Ginny when he realized she was looking at him quizzically. “What?”

“You know who the rose is from, don’t you?”

Harry’s mouth dropped open. How did she do this? “What are you talking about? I don’t know anything.”

Ginny grinned. “Harry, don’t lie to me.”

He sighed and pulled her close to kiss her softly, moving his lips to her ear. “Fine, it’s from Seamus. But don’t you dare tell her.”

“Really?” She exclaimed. “He likes her?”

Harry nodded. "Shh, and yeah, he's liked her for like three years. I told him he had to tell her."

Ginny nodded. "You're right he does have to tell her. That's so sweet though."

Harry grinned. "I can be sweet too." He held out his hand and a red lily appeared seemingly out of thin air. He handed it to her. "See?"

She grinned and kissed him. "Oh!" She kissed him again. "Thank your elementals for me."

He sighed. "Nothing gets past you."

She laughed. "Nope not a thing. Oh look, the paper's here, do you think they wrote any more lies about us?"

He shrugged. "Who knows?"

He accepted the *Daily Prophet* and paid the owl who delivered it. He opened up the newspaper and swore.

"What is it?" Ginny asked, reaching out to grab his hand. "Are you alright?" As soon as she touched him she felt guilt clawing through his system. "Harry! Whatever is in there is not your fault!"

He glared at her. "I wish you didn't know everything."

"It's not your fault! Now what does it say?"

Harry tossed the paper at her and she opened it up and gasped when she read the article:

## **MURDER OF DAILY PROPHET REPORTERS!**

Written by: *Thomas Sealtest*

*Reporters Greg Henderson and Kelly Bray were found murdered in their London homes yesterday. The deaths were extremely brutal and led investigating Aurors to think that it was Mr. Riddle and his*

*followers, Death Eaters.*

*Henderson was found yesterday morning by his fiancée, Gloria Tessier, in his flat. According to Miss Tessier the murder was very gruesome.*

*"It was so horrible! I don't understand how anyone could have done that to poor Greg! He was so wonderful and he wouldn't hurt a fly!"*

*Henderson's body was found hacked to pieces in his common room with blood strewn through most of the place. His tongue was cut out as was his left eye. Aurors believe that these injuries occurred before his death as a means of torture. The rest of the body was so mutilated that it's too hard to have any more facts at the moment relating to the incident. Auror James Potter and his partner Auror Ian McGregor are looking into it.*

*"It was obviously Death Eaters and most likely on the orders of (BEEP) himself. He's making a statement and I think that it probably has to do with the article Henderson wrote in the paper a few days ago. He pissed him off." Auror Potter told the Daily Prophet.*

*His partner only nodded next to him. "Not only did Henderson basically make fun of the nickname that (BEEP) has chosen for himself, but he went out of his way to tell people that they should ignore this nickname he's made for himself and call him by his old name."*

*"Tom Riddle is the name of his muggle father. That obviously wouldn't have made him happy." Auror Potter explained. "This was payback and I'd say a bit of revenge. The people who did this were seriously pissed off."*

*Auror McGregor had much of the same comment for the murder of the Daily Prophet reporter, and part-time writer for Witch Weekly, Kelly Bray.*

*"Bray was killed just as brutally and we are obviously not ruling out murder. This was Death Eaters and there's no doubt about it. It was rough and it was brutal. It was a message."*

*Bray's body was even worse than Henderson's. She was found by her mother in her London flat Sunday morning. She had been violently raped and again her tongue had been cut out. Every one of her fingers had been broken and the investigating Aurors think that it was probably done before death as well. The scene was incredibly gruesome.*

*When asked about the possibility of a vendetta against the Daily Prophet, Auror Potter commented somewhat angrily.*

*"Look at the crap that you guys publish in the newspaper! You've obviously properly pissed (BEEP) off and I don't know about a vendetta exactly but I'd watch you're back, especially if you write anything related to my son and (BEEP)!"*

*The murders will not be forgotten and the murderers will be found.*

*Memorial service listings can be found on page 4.*

Ginny gasped when she placed the paper down. "I feel sick."

Harry took her hand in his. "So do I. I'm the one that yelled out Voldemort's real name and I'm the one that basically told them to write it and they-"

"They what, Harry? They published it, not you! And what about Bray? She didn't write about Tom, Harry, she wrote lies about me! Why is she dead?" Ginny demanded. She jolted when a hand fell on her shoulder and she looked up at her brother.

"Gin's got a point, Harry, why was Bray killed?" Ron asked.

Hermione sighed. "Unless Voldemort still remembers ... the Chamber? Do you think he has a plan for Ginny in some way? I mean, Bray just trashed Ginny, right?"

Harry's eyes darkened. "If he touches her, I'll kill him." His voice was so cold it sent chills down Ginny's spine.



“Harry, he’s not going to hurt me! There must have been some reason why Bray was targeted too!”

Harry shrugged. “I don’t know, but right now the only thing that I’m concerned with is him. He keeps ... everything’s been going so good.”

Ginny moved to curl into his lap. “You knew he wasn’t going to go away.”

He nodded. “I know. But it makes me worry about what else he’s got planned.” He looked up when a shadow fell over him. “Hey Uncle Sirius.”

Sirius nodded. “Come with me, all four of you.”

They glanced up at Sirius in surprise before they followed him. Harry nodded at Draco who looked at them in concern and he jumped up from the Slytherin table to join them. Once they were inside of his office, Sirius closed the door.

“I’m assuming that you saw the newspaper?”

“Yeah, the Henderson and Bray murders.”

“Yes well ... something big happened last night as well, something that wasn’t in the papers.”

“What’s going on, Sirius?” Ginny asked.

Sirius sighed. “There was an attack last night on a small village in Glasgow. Voldemort himself was there. He took some prisoners and ... it was close to the manor, Harry, close enough that both James and Lily went out, as did Remus and Tonks.”

“Are they alright?” Harry asked, jumping to his feet.

Sirius nodded. “Yes, I’m sorry; I didn’t mean to give you that impression. Lily-Love had a bit of spell-burn on her arm and James some on his leg. As far as I know, Remus and Tonks weren’t hurt at

all. But they took some prisoners; one of them was Aberforth Dumbledore.”

“Who’s that?” Draco asked.

“Dumbledore’s younger brother. He has a vital role in the Order. His capture makes a lot of people worry. Obviously he can’t give out everything as he’s not secret keeper but Voldemort can definitely get a bit out of him.”

“He’ll torture him.” Harry whispered.

Sirius nodded. “To the death, aye. Listen Harry, I’m telling you this because Dumbledore went out to do something. I don’t know where he went or what he’s doing. But he asked me to inform you of this and then to send you and Ginny to Grimmauld Place for the night. He’s going to meet you there.”

Harry nodded. “Alright.”

Sirius sighed. “And Harry?”

“Yeah?”

“I’ve been trying to contact Garrett and Julianna too in Ireland, I’d like for them to move into the Manor if you get a hold of James before me, can you mention it?” Sirius asked.

“Of course, do you think that they’re in danger?”

“I honestly don’t know, but with Lex in her condition ... I don’t want anything to upset her.” He explained.

Harry nodded. “Alright. So when do we leave?”

“Right now.” He turned to Draco then. “Draco, just to tell you, Lucius was one of the Death Eaters involved in Aberforth’s capture. I just thought that you might like to know.”

Draco nodded. “Thanks.”

Sirius pointed to the fire and sighed. "I don't know what Dumbledore wants but I can tell you this much, I've only ever seen him that angry once in my entire life and it was when he fought Voldemort in Godric's Hollow over eighteen years ago. The night Voldemort killed Gwen and Andrew. Whatever he has to tell you, it's serious."

Harry nodded. "Alright." He reached over to hold Ginny's hand tightly in his and they stepped into the fire disappearing in an eruption of green flames.

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## Chapter 73: Flight from Death

**Author's Notes:** hope u guys like it!  
plz review!

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## Chapter LXXIII — Flight from Death

Harry and Ginny stumbled out of the fireplace and into the kitchen in Grimmauld Place. Harry took Ginny's hand in his and they headed into the living room after finding the kitchen empty. Dumbledore was seated in an armchair staring at the fire in the grate. He never even looked up when they came in.

"Good morning, sir," Harry replied, hoping to sound calm and not as worried and panicky as he felt.

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes." He shook his head as if he was pushing thoughts out and when he turned to look at them Harry realized just how old Dumbledore was. He knew that he was an old man, up in age, but he never really thought about it because he was so full of life. But now, as Dumbledore sat in the armchair, his hands crossed in front of him, his blue eyes not twinkling as much as normal, he looked every bit his age of one hundred and fifty-two.

Ginny pulled Harry over to the couch and they took a seat. "Sirius said that you wanted to see us, Professor?"

"Yes I did. I apologize; I'm a little out of sorts this morning. I assume that he told you about Aberforth?"

Harry nodded. "He did. Have you heard any news?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, I have not and I don't expect to. Abe can hold his own; I'm not concerned so much with that. He may be my younger brother but he's always been able to hold his own. It's ... if Voldemort finds out what we're up to ... chaos will erupt."

"What we're up to? Sir, I'm not following you." Harry replied.

"I don't expect you to. We have many very important things to discuss, Harry. Some of which you will be angry that I kept from you and some of which will shock you to your very core." He sighed. "I'm an old man, Harry, and I've made many mistakes in my past. Some turned out to be worth it and others turned out to be even worse. I asked Ginevra to be here with you today because a good portion of it concerns her and I could use her help as well."

Ginny nodded. "Of course, Professor, you know that Harry and I will help."

Dumbledore smiled now. "Thank you. I am honoured for your blind loyalty that you devote to me without even knowing what it is that I am to ask of you."

Harry shrugged. "Ginny's right. We don't need to know, sir, we trust you."

"Thank you." He waved his hand and Dobby came into the living room with a tray of tea. "I asked Sirius to mention that you will be staying here for the night. Staying the night for sure as what I have to tell you is so vast ... I've been struggling with telling you the truth since I told you of the prophecy."

Harry's eyes darkened. "It concerns the prophecy?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "Not the prophecy itself, but it plays a large role in the final outcome of it." He leaned over to pour himself a cup of tea and then he took a sip. "I'm not even sure where to begin. Even the beginning seems like a faraway place."

Ginny smiled. "Wherever you think it is necessary, sir."

"I've always admired your wisdom, Miss Weasley." She blushed and he smiled. "Alright, let's start with the prophecy. Sixteen years ago, the world was in chaos. Voldemort had risen to power quickly and effectively and he was more than ready to take what he saw as his manifest destiny. He wanted to be in control; he wanted to have power; he wanted others to know about that power and not only fear him but to be in awe of him. He succeeded in many ways but at the same time he failed at others. You see, Voldemort is an alter ego, I suppose that alter ego is the right term, for the man himself. Voldemort is powerful and he's dangerous. Tom Riddle is still a man. Ginny understands this."

Ginny nodded. "But even as Tom, he was ... dangerous, I mean."

"He was, yes. Why?"

She glanced at Harry for a moment and when he took her hand in his again she felt calmer. "Because he had a way of manipulating you. He was mean and he was rude and sometimes really harsh, but before that side of him came out he was friendly and sweet and charming, and he acted like he cared. It was almost as if he was drawing me in for something later. I didn't realize it at the time, but I thought that he was wonderful. The perfect friend."

Dumbledore nodded. "Go on. Why did you think that? How did he make you believe it?"

"By talking to me and being sympathetic. He was so good at being sympathetic. I wrote to him ... poured my soul out to him about this stupid crush that I had on Harry and how my brothers were mean to me and how I didn't feel like I fit in. He told me I was wrong and that I naturally belonged but I just hadn't figured out where yet. He told me

... he told me that my brothers were just older so they thought that they knew what was best and that one day I would kill all of them and prove them wrong. I was shocked and I told him that I didn't want to kill my brothers and that I loved them. He immediately apologized, claiming that he had misunderstood me." She moved automatically closer to Harry and he slipped his arms around her waist as she leaned back against him. The feel of his warm body behind hers made her feel calm again. "He was sweet like that, complimenting, and when he did sneak in a horrible statement he acted so appalled ... he was feeding me."

"Tom had many skills as a young boy. One of the biggest ones was manipulation. He taught himself to use it long ago when he was very young. It could have been as a result of his childhood or it could have been a way for him to want attention, but either way, it was troublesome." Dumbledore explained. He took a sip of his tea before continuing. "Tom doesn't seem to have any fears at first; he's on top of the world and he feels like he owns it. But Tom is afraid of something. Harry, do you know what that is?"

Harry's arms were still wrapped around Ginny as he looked over at Dumbledore. He wanted to say no, that he had no idea what the evil maniac was afraid of but even as he thought it, he remembered. He could see it all clearly, the battle in the atrium at the Ministry and how Dumbledore had taunted him. "Death."

Dumbledore nodded. "Tom's afraid to die. I think that I know why this is but at the same time I can't explain it fully. He's afraid of death."

"Why?" Ginny asked. "I mean, I don't want to die either but I know that I will someday. I just figure that when I do it will be my time, my destiny to die at that time."

Harry nodded. "I agree."

Dumbledore smiled. "Death is but the next great adventure. But Tom doesn't see it that way. He doesn't believe in an afterlife or anything of the kind. He sees death as a final end. Ginny, what did you learn about the afterlife?"

Ginny looked startled for a moment before she shrugged. "Well, nothing really. I mean, nobody really knows anything. It's just a common belief. I know that muggles believe in something called religion strongly and they hold onto it along with their so-called God to save them. There's a belief in Heaven, a mystical paradise, I suppose, where one gets to go if they lived a good life. Then there's the Hell dimension, which one goes to if they've had a bad life. But then there's other religions that believe in samsara and karma. That whole wheel of rebirth and reincarnation deal. That's more like, well, if I did many good things in my life then I might get to return as an incredibly beautiful and smart person or if I did something really rotten, well, then I might come back as a snake. Those are odd options, I know, but it's the idea that you will be reincarnated into another living thing." She explained. "But then there's other people, like Tom I suppose, who don't believe in any of that. He thinks that when you're dead, you're dead, worm food and under ground, left to rot for centuries. I think that idea scares him more than anything." She grinned. "Maybe that's the way to defeat him."

"What do you mean?" Dumbledore asked.

Ginny grinned. "We can put him in a coffin and bury him alive and he'll just scare himself to death."

Dumbledore chuckled softly as he shook his head. "Interesting theory, Miss Weasley, but I don't think that that would work. Tom is afraid to die yes, but I think that he would find a way out of that coffin. One thing that Riddle is, is very determined. If a very determined young man turns that determination into such a drive for power, what do you think that would bring?"

Ginny's eyes widened. "A search for immortality."

Harry gulped. "He couldn't do that, could he? I mean, sir, the Philosopher's Stone, it's destroyed."

Ginny shook her head. "There are other ways. Bill's told me hundreds of stories. The ancient Egyptians believed in immortality and all sorts of potions and ancient scrolls have many different variations of how one goes about it."

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes, they do."

"Bill told me though that some of them aren't really immortal in the way that one might want. I mean, some of them are like immortal in death; the legacy lives on. And some of them are that you die now but you're soul can move into others and never die." Ginny explained. "Those are dangerous dark ancient magicks. You don't think that Tom got into those do you?"

Harry nodded. "Please say it is isn't so. I don't know anything about immortality except that it allows you to never die and that's the last thing we need right now."

"I don't know if he has delved that far into the ancient magicks but I do know of something that he has done to prevent his death. Harry, I think that you know a little bit about this."

Harry shook his head. "Not really."

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes you do. Think about it. Why isn't Voldemort dead now?"

Harry shrugged and then realization hit him. "Because ... well Da put some huge spell on me and Mum for protection."

"That's not quite it. Harry, I know that you and James have phenomenal powers that go back to ancient goddesses. I don't know the full extent of it as it is a deep secret in the Potter family, but I do know that you survived that night for a reason."

"Because of Mum's love for me." He replied. "She tried to sacrifice herself for me. By her doing that and on top of all of the protection spells from Da, the spell backfired and hit Voldemort. But he didn't die because it wasn't the full spell. But it did strip him of his body. He was left as nothing more then a lifeless soul floating the earth. He could possess things and he eventually did with Quirrell to try to get the stone. But even then, he had to go through Quirrell because he didn't have his own body. He almost came back again by using his soul to possess that old diary of his but when I destroyed it; he lost another



thing to work in. But then he invented a potion to bring his body back.”

“You’re on the right track, Harry. What did that potion entail? I know it was a hard night for you, but I need you to remember.”

Harry gulped as he closed his eyes, remembering that night that he had stayed in the graveyard, chained to the headstone. “I — I was tied to the headstone, his father’s headstone. Tom Riddle Senior, a muggle. There was a big cauldron filled with water. I don’t think anything else was in it ... well, unicorn blood. But Wormtail took some of my blood and then he cut off his own hand to add to the mix. Blood of the enemy and flesh of the servant, a sacrifice. Then he needed bone from the father. He hated his father. I think because he was muggle but he did and made a point of saying so. I think it probably would have angered him to know that he would need to use something of his father’s to bring him back to life. To bring him back to life in the sense that he wanted anyway. He needed help but he found a way to come back to life.”

Dumbledore nodded. “Exactly. He found a way. But there’s something that neither one of you have considered.”

“What’s that?” Ginny asked, pouring herself a cup of tea and one for Harry.

“He didn’t hate his father for being a muggle, at least not initially, though that might have been part of it later. He hated his father for deserting him.”

Ginny nodded. “That makes sense. Tom told me once that he grew up in an orphanage because his parents were dead. That explains why he fears death so much, both of his parents succumbed to it before he even had a chance to know them.”

Dumbledore shook his head. “Alas, that too would have been the initial feeling. But both of his parents were not dead, at least not for many years.”

Harry managed a slightly puzzled look. “What do you mean?”

Dumbledore stood up and placed a pensive on the table. "In this pensive, I have memories that I have collected over the last year of people who knew Voldemort when he was young. You can both view them at a later date but right now I think that it will be easier for me to summarize it for you. Each one tells a story that will lead up to vital piece of information that will result in exactly whose side will win this war."

Harry nodded. "Alright, what are they?"

Dumbledore nodded. "About seventy-two years ago, a young man by the name of Bob Ogden, headed into Little Hangleton on official ministry business. The place that he was to go belonged to the Gaunt family. They lived in a little ramshackle shack on a heavily wooded hillside just above the small town. Ogden worked for the Department of Magical Law Enforcement and had been headed that way because of Morfin Gaunt, the son of Marvolo Gaunt. Morfin had been accused of hexing a muggle. This was a huge problem at one time because of the whole muggle/magical relations. Now before Ogden even met Morfin, he knew something was wrong with the family. There was a snake nailed to the front door when he walked in. What they discussed, I'm not sure as I do not understand Parseltongue, would you mind giving it a try, Harry?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry nodded. "Sure." He watched as Dumbledore used magic to play the pensive memory on the wall almost as if one was viewing a screen. Harry grimaced as he listened and he knew by the way that Ginny had slid closer to him, that she could still understand a great deal of it.

"Well, that first part's a song." Harry replied. "Not much of one, mind you, but it's there. It says: *Hissy, hissy, little snakey; slither on the floor; you be good to Morfin or he'll nail you to the door.* I'm getting the feeling that this guy is a bit of whack job."

Dumbledore chuckled. "He was a bit, I suppose. Alright, what else is going on?"

Harry was quiet for a few minutes as he listened. "When Ogden

arrives he's a little nervous because of the snake and about what kind of people he's dealing with. He sees Morfin hissing this little tune that he doesn't understand so I guess that would make him a bit nervous as well. Marvolo comes out. He's really angry and demands of Ogden why he's there. He doesn't like strangers or unexpected visitors. Ogden explains that they were notified of the arrival and that he is there to talk to Morfin about using magic on muggles. Morfin and Marvolo basically ignore him so he follows them inside. There's a girl there. She's not very pretty and she looks ... battered, I suppose, is the word. She's very plain. Ogden finds out that this is Marvolo's daughter Merope and she seems to be a squib. Marvolo is constantly yelling at her. She looks like she might have been abused. When Marvolo realizes that Ogden is still there he throws his heritage in his face. Marvolo is ... blimey, the direct descendent of Salazar Slytherin. He shows off a ring on his hand. It's very intricate. A gold ring with a coat of arms that is carved into black stone. Ogden ignores him and says that it hardly matters but then they are interrupted by the sound of two muggles riding by on horses. Merope gets this weird look on her face and Morfin begins to tease her. He says how revolting it is for her to fancy the rich muggle who lives in the mansion on the hill. Both Marvolo and Morfin are disgusted by this. They think that that's the worst of all crimes for her to fancy a muggle. They see muggles as below them and that Merope is acting shameful. Morfin continues to resist the trial so Ogden leaves."

Dumbledore smiled. "Very good, Harry. I got a good portion out of that without the words but it helps to re-organize things for myself. Ginny, did you understand that as well?"

Ginny nodded. "Yes. Most of it. I still sort of retained some of the skills Tom left with me."

Dumbledore nodded. "You would yes, because Voldemort never meant to give you his powers, he meant to kill you and come back to life, feeding on your soul." When she shivered, Harry kissed her cheek and cuddled her closer as Dumbledore smiled. "You know this and you understand why some of his skills were passed to you. Now Harry, you said that they called Merope a squib? I don't believe that she was a squib. She was abused and battered to such an extent that I think she fearfully hid her magic."

“Hid her magic?” Harry asked. “How does one do that?”

“Everyone reacts differently to different situations. You showed magic at a very young age and even when you didn’t understand that you were using it, you still managed. Both of you did. Merope was treated unfairly her whole life and I think her fear caused her to repress her powers. She was used as a slave for Morfin and Marvolo.”

“So, she did have magic?” Harry asked.

Dumbledore nodded. “Yes, but it never showed itself, or I don’t think it did, until after this. Now Ogden knew that he wasn’t going to be able to get Morfin to trial so both Morfin and Marvolo were arrested. Marvolo was arrested for attacking the Ministry personnel who tried to arrest Morfin. He was sentenced to six months in Azkaban. His son was sentenced to three years. Suddenly, Merope found herself alone in this shack, independent for the first time in her life and now she could do magic. The only thing she possessed was a heavy gold locket that once belonged to Slytherin. Do you remember why Morfin and Marvolo were so ashamed of her?”

“Because she fancied a muggle.”

“Exactly. Eighteen-year-old Merope was in love with the rich young man named Tom Riddle. He however, had no desire to be near her. What do you think she did to rectify that the minute she found out about her powers?”

Ginny smiled. “She wanted him to love her. So she probably used a love potion.”

Dumbledore nodded. “That’s what I believe. She brews a love potion and slips it into the drink of Tom Riddle. He falls in love with her and they get married much to the dismay of Riddle’s parents and the townspeople. Riddle had been engaged to a beautiful young woman at the time and everyone was shocked at the sudden wedding. Now I don’t know exactly what happens from there, but Merope became pregnant and she believed that Riddle actually loved her so she wanted to take that chance. She stopped giving him the love potion.

Once the effect of it wore off, he took one look at her and deserted her. He didn't love her like she thought he did. Now Merope is alone and pregnant. At some point Marvolo returns from prison only to find that his daughter has left. He's horrified that his daughter has run off with a muggle and he doesn't live to see his son come out of prison."

"So now Morfin is still in jail and Merope is pregnant and alone?" Harry asked.

"Yes."

"And that baby, that's Voldemort?"

"Yes."

Ginny continued to stay cuddled next to Harry, his arm draped over her shoulders as she took his other hand in hers. "So what happened to Merope?"

Dumbledore sighed. "What happens next? Well, from the information that I have gathered, it's mostly all theory. But first things first, is that she needs money. Riddle deserted her completely and left her with nothing. The only thing that she has is the locket of Slytherin. She goes to see this jewelry owner named Caractacus Burke. He offers to buy it for ten galleons, very cheap. She accepts because she's desperate. I don't know how much time passes in between then but soon she goes into labour and gives birth to a baby boy. She stays alive long enough to name him Tom Riddle for his father and Marvolo for his grandfather. Tom is then placed in an orphanage. I don't know much about the next decade but I do know that the summer before his first year at Hogwarts I went to the orphanage to talk to him myself. Headmaster Dippet often assigned teachers out to talk to prospective students. I met Mrs. Cole, the head of the orphanage where he was living, and the things I learned left me with curiosity and a bit of concern."

"Concern?" Harry asked. "Why concern?"

"He was no ordinary eleven-year-old boy. Now I'm not saying that as a bad thing as you, Harry, were hardly ordinary. You were powerful at

that age and you had come from a loving family even if you had some rocky years. Tom was different. Mrs. Cole and the other administrators and children considered him odd. He was a bully and Mrs. Cole told me that she knew he was the reason behind nasty little accidents that happened. But she could never prove it. When I went in to speak with him he was rude and he was demanding. I could tell by the tone of his voice that he had already learned to control people with his mind to a certain degree. I could even feel the gentle probing against my shields. It amazed me as he was very young. At the time, I had no knowledge that he was Slytherin's heir but you could be sure that I researched his past after that visit. I learned something else that day. He kept trophies."

"Trophies? Like awards?" Ginny asked.

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, no, not that kind of trophy. He was a bully. He kept trophies of things he did to other kids or things that he had stolen from them. I made him return them all. He wanted a demonstration that I was who I said I was so I set his wardrobe on fire. He was shocked and I wanted to shock him. He was young and arrogant and rude. I forced him to return the items he had stolen and to apologize. I told him more about Hogwarts and gave him a list of supplies. He was more than ready to accept that he was a wizard. Right away, it was this dawning of realization. He wanted to be different, to be special. I left, but I decided to keep an eye on him. He came to Hogwarts and I thought maybe that I had been wrong. He had good grades. He was immediately sorted in Slytherin and the teachers tended to treat him a bit differently. They were sympathetic towards the fact that he was an orphan. He might have fit in well but he had this obsession with finding his parents. He searched for a long time before he gave up on finding his father and he came to the conclusion that his father wasn't a wizard. I don't think that he wanted to admit that his mother was a witch because he doesn't understand why she would have let herself die otherwise. I also think that he had a very negative attitude towards women. It's at this time that I believe he picks up the alias name, Lord Voldemort."

"Why Voldemort?" Ginny asked. "I mean, I've always wondered about it. What does it mean?"

Dumbledore smiled. "That's an interesting question, Miss Weasley, and one that no one before really cared to know."

Harry grinned. "But you know the answer."

Dumbledore smiled. "Aye I do. It's an interesting name that he chose. It's French and it actually means "flight from death"."

"That's bold on his part isn't it? I mean, isn't he basically telling people, I'm afraid of death?" Harry replied.

"Not really." Dumbledore replied. "Why would anyone take the time to research the meaning of his name? And even if they did I don't think that they would notice the difference there. They would not stop and think that he is afraid of anything."

Ginny nodded. "That makes sense. After all, Voldemort is too greatly feared by those around him. No one would stop and think about that. Flight from death, that's very interesting. And the lord?"

Harry shrugged. "I figure he thinks that gives him power. Throughout history a lord has had power over peasants and large groups of people. Other than the king, he was the most powerful; he had the power to tax and to control and to build armies. Or if you look at it through that religious angle again, Lord Almighty, Lord God, Lord of Heaven — an immortal being. Something that cannot be explained because the power is so great. Something that can't be killed and something that has unexplainable power. The fear of God — can put fear into people's hearts quickly. Or the wrath of God — that whole angle of punishment. Either way, I think by using Lord it gives him power."

Dumbledore smiled. "Very good, Mr. Potter. That does indeed give him power. It also puts him above the rest of us. Or so he believes. We all know that the title doesn't do that. James carries the title Lord, and he hardly acts superior."

"So what happens next? I mean, Tom's at school now and he's adopted this alias name. What's he doing?"

“He’s exploring, Ginny. Like I mentioned before, he doesn’t believe that his mother was a witch, or he doesn’t want to believe it because otherwise she wouldn’t have fallen to the human weakness of death. Very soon after, he discovers that he is a direct descendent of Salazar Slytherin. I don’t know how he learns of it but I assume soon after he discovers the Chamber of Secrets. I’m not sure how long before he opened it.”

“I do, Professor,” Ginny replied. “He told me. He studied it for years before he finally risked opening it in his fifth year.”

Dumbledore nodded. He reached over to pour himself another cup of tea. “That explains a bit. Like as to how he knew enough about it to have Hagrid holding the bag so to speak. Well, the summer before his sixth year, he went on a mission to search for his family. I believe that this was the last time he tried anything about finding them. His research led him to the Gaunt shack. I’m sure that he was quite horrified by the state of it. Marvolo was dead by this time but Morfin was still living there. Morfin was shocked and angry by him as he assumed that he was Tom Riddle, the rich man from the hill who had stolen his sister. They converse in Parseltongue for a bit, which surprises Morfin. Tom learns from his uncle that his father is a rich muggle who lives only on the hill nearby. I got this memory from Morfin, which I carefully extracted from his mind during the summer before he died. He spent a long time in Azkaban. You see, once Tom learned of his father, he stole Morfin’s wand and he went straight to the house on the hill. There he confronted his father and his grandparents, who were by all accounts, sitting around the dinner table. He killed them. I believe it was the first time that he had killed anyone. After that he planted the memory of killing them in his uncle’s mind and his uncle was sentenced to life in prison. With the memory in his brain, Morfin confesses to the ministry officials, who go to him since he is the only muggle hating wizard in the area.”

Ginny rubbed her fingers over the top of Harry’s hand. “He killed at sixteen.”

“He hated them,” Harry muttered. “They deserted him in every way. He had so much anger stored up.”



“He did. But he went about it the wrong way.”

Harry nodded. “I know that. But at the same time, I can see why he did it. But then when you look at what he did to his uncle, you know he wasn’t suffering. That was cold and calculated the way he made sure that someone else was accused of the crime.”

“Exactly.” Dumbledore replied. “He was a very disturbed young man. But there is something interesting. At the same time that Morfin goes to prison, Marvolo’s ring goes missing.”

“You think he stole it?” Ginny asked.

“As a young boy he had a hankering for trophies,” Dumbledore replied. “You don’t think that he still would?”

Ginny nodded. “He took the ring. Did he know that it once belonged to Slytherin?”

Dumbledore shook his head. “That I don’t know but he most likely discovered it fairly soon after. I saw him wearing it soon after the deaths of the Riddle family. It was soon after that I learned about Morfin and I wondered but I never knew the full details. So he finishes up at Hogwarts, friendless I would say, though he does have faithful followers. It is this group that he commanded in school that became the first Death Eaters.”

“That’s an odd name also,” Ginny replied. “I mean what’s that supposed to be anyway some type of weird cliché about how they eat death for breakfast or something?”

Harry snorted. “Uh, Gin, I’m not sure about that one.”

Ginny shrugged. “Well, I think it’s a good point. Sir, do you know why they are called Death Eaters?”

Dumbledore shook his head. “Alas, no, I do not. But I suppose that he thought it might have suited the image that he worked out for himself.”

Ginny nodded. "I guess so."

Harry grinned and turned to kiss her softly. "You're crazy, you know that?"

She shrugged. "You're the one that's in love with me."

He laughed. "Yeah, maybe I'm crazy." He kissed her again. "Nope, not crazy, just happy." He turned to look at Dumbledore who was smiling at them, the twinkle winking in his eye even if it was only for a moment. "So, he forms the Death Eaters, then what does he do?"

"He asks Headmaster Dippet for a job."

"He what?" Ginny spluttered. "He wanted to work at Hogwarts?"

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes, he did. Tom has never really had a home and Hogwarts felt like home to him. I however, think that there was a bit more to it than that. First of all, Hogwarts was the place where he had been the happiest, so naturally he would be sad to leave it. Second, is that the castle itself is a stronghold of some ancient magic and Tom had already discovered many of its secrets. Lastly, as a teacher, Tom would have had a great deal of power and influence over the students. That was a great danger. Dippet was considering the boy but I asked him not to, for those reasons and because he was only seventeen. Dippet agreed and told Tom that he was too young and to come back in a few years. So Tom went and got a job at Borgin and Burkes."

"He became a sales clerk?" Harry asked in surprise.

"He did. Many people were very surprised with this. Why would he waste such talent? But he obviously enjoyed his work. The next memory I took from a house elf. It was of Tom going to see a woman named Hepzibah. It was her house elf, Hokey, that I took the memory from. He was charged with working to get two of her most treasured possessions from her and to bring them to Borgin and Burkes. The cup of Helga Hufflepuff and the locket of Salazar Slytherin."

"The one that Merope sold?" Harry asked.

Dumbledore nodded. "Yes. So, he charmed her with flowers and compliments. He could be very charming when he needed to be."

Ginny nodded. "Eerily charming."

Harry tugged her closer so that her head rested on his shoulder. "So what happened?"

"Well, he flirted and charmed her into bringing them out to show him. Two days later she's found dead. Funny thing about it though is that her house elf confesses to poisoning her at the same time that the cup and locket go missing."

"He planted the memory again."

"Yes, Harry I think that he did. But again a lot of this is speculation on my part. He resigns from Borgin and Burkes and he goes away to study. This is when he delves deeply into dark magic. His followers grow larger and there are more frequent deaths. Years later, when I am headmaster, he returns to the school. He asks me for the post of Defence Against the Dark Arts, which is open as our DADA teacher was retiring. I questioned him about his activities and kept calling him Tom. He became angry and agitated, stating that it wasn't his name. I questioned him a bit more about the Death Eaters and the rumoured activity I had heard involving them. He shrugged it off. I refused him the job and to that day Hogwarts has never had a Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher that's lasted more than one year. Though I'm hoping that Sirius breaks that record this year. I'm quite pleased with him." Dumbledore replied.

Harry grinned. "Yeah, Sirius is great. So you just let him go? I mean, you knew that he had been involved in all of these terrible things?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, I did not. I only knew rumours. It was the year after that that the war really kicked off and his name became known. But it is here that the horrors begin."

"Horrors?" Ginny asked.

“Yes, Miss Weasley, what is the meaning of Voldemort again?”

Ginny glanced at him quizzically. “Flight from death.”

“Yes and if we’ve been discussing his great fear of death then what do you suppose he was doing during all that studying of dark magic?”

Harry nodded in understanding. “Trying to find a way to become immortal.”

Dumbledore nodded. “Exactly. And I believe that’s he’s partially succeeded.”

Harry spit his tea out of his mouth. “HE WHAT?”

Dumbledore held up his hand. “Listen, Harry, *partially* succeeded. Voldemort can be killed. Do either one of you know what a horcrux is?”

“I’ve heard of it,” Ginny replied. “Bill mentioned something about it once. He found a spell relating to it from some ancient Egyptian tomb. But he said it was believed it originally came from Crete, the idea. He wouldn’t tell me what it was except that it was really bad.”

“It is bad. A horcrux is an object or a thing that can hold a piece of one’s soul, keeping it alive and well.”

“And you believe Voldemort made one of these?” Harry asked.

“I do. However, it is not just one that I think he made. I managed to snag a memory from a good friend of mine; a retired potions teacher who taught your parents, Harry, Professor Horace Slughorn. He was Potions Master here when Voldemort went to school. In his memory, Voldemort asks about horcruxes. He uses the excuse that he found it in a book and didn’t know the meaning. Horace shared his knowledge because he’s the type to always believe the good in people. He told him that a horcrux can only be made by taking a life. Voldemort asked if one could split their soul into more than two pieces and suggested seven. Horace was horrified by this and stopped the conversation. But it leads me to believe that since at

least sixth year, Voldemort has planned on making seven horcruxes.”  
Dumbledore explained.

Ginny let out a deep breath. “Explain this horcrux thing a bit more. So a piece of a soul goes inside, how does one do that?”

“A horcrux is when a witch or wizard splits their soul in two, putting half of it into an object outside of the body. By doing this, the witch or wizard has a chance at survival. Therefore, if their body is attacked or destroyed they can’t die because part of their soul is still out there somewhere. It’s still on the earth and it’s undamaged because it wasn’t inside of the body when the body was attacked. To split one’s soul you must commit an inexplicable evil. To split one’s soul, you must commit murder.”

“And Voldemort gave the impression that he wanted seven horcruxes?” Harry asked in shock.

Dumbledore nodded. “Yes.”

“Can he do that?”

“Yes, Harry, I believe that he already has. It’s never been done before but I still think that he’s done it. The most anyone has ever done was one horcrux. I believe that Voldemort has managed seven.”

“Why seven?” Ginny asked.

“It’s considered a magical number. It always has been. The meaning for it, well I’ve heard so many it’s hard to narrow it. But if seven is a magical number then naturally he would want seven of them.” He explained.

She just nodded. “Wow.”

Harry nodded. “Yes, wow.”

Dumbledore sighed. “I know that I just threw a lot of information your way but I’m afraid there’s more.”

“More? How can there be more? How are we supposed to find seven pieces of a soul?” Harry asked. “It’s impossible!”

Dumbledore smiled. “Nothing’s impossible, Harry. And just because there are seven doesn’t mean that there are seven left to be destroyed.” He reached into his robes and pulled out a ring before tossing it at them. “What’s that?”

“Slytherin’s ring,” Harry replied.

Dumbledore nodded. “I found it buried in a hidden chamber beneath the Gaunt house. There was a horcrux inside. I destroyed it.”

“How?” Harry asked.

“With James’ help. I know your father is powerful and I asked him to help me get rid of the curse on it. He did so, no questions asked. I told him that I couldn’t explain just yet. He has no idea just what he helped destroy.”

“Well, one down, anyway,” Ginny murmured.

Dumbledore shook his head. “More than one. Harry destroyed one when he was twelve years old.”

“He did?” Ginny asked in surprise, glancing up at her boyfriend.

“The diary,” Harry murmured in understanding. “It was a horcrux.”

Dumbledore nodded. “It was. That’s how Voldemort managed to make it possess Ginny in the way that it did. It was a part of his soul.”

Ginny shivered. “How did he destroy it?”

“I shoved a poisonous basilisk fang through it,” Harry replied.

“You did and it destroyed it. Why? Because it was probably one of the first, if not the first, horcruxes that he made. It wasn’t as strong or as powerful as other ones, such as the ring, was.” Dumbledore explained. “Now, the locket of Slytherin was also a horcrux.”

"It's gone too?" Harry asked.

Dumbledore nodded. "The dark magic on it was intense and I asked Sirius to take a look at it. He's good at dodging dark spells to break into things. Orion Black put spells like that over everything. Sirius was just like James in the sense that he didn't ask he just destroyed it." He pulled the locket from his robes. "That makes three horcruxes down."

"Four more to go?"

"Three technically," Dumbledore replied. "The seventh and final horcrux would lie in Voldemort himself. A man can live without a soul but Voldemort wouldn't give up his totally."

"Sir? Does he know when a part of his soul is destroyed? I mean, can he feel it?" Harry asked.

"Excellent question, Harry, and the answer is no, I don't believe he can. To split the soul, murder must take place, and then from there the soul is torn apart. Once it leaves the body I don't think that Voldemort can feel it anymore until he is using that part of the soul again. I'm pretty sure that he doesn't know what I have been up to with the horcruxes, at least not yet."

Ginny's hand flew over her mouth. "Aberforth!"

Dumbledore nodded. "He's been helping me locate the forth horcrux. We believe it to be the cup of Helga Hufflepuff and we have a few ideas of where it might be. The fifth horcrux, I have no idea what it might be though following true to form, I would think that it's an artifact of either Gryffindor or Ravenclaw. The sixth horcrux I think is Nagini."

"His snake?" Harry asked in surprise. "Is it even possible to put a piece of one's soul in a snake?"

"If is it done properly. Nagini has been around for at least thirty-five years. Quite a long life for a snake. I'm almost positive that that's

where the last piece rests. But before one could move in on Nagini, the other two have to be located so as not to tip him off."

"But Aberforth won't tell him?" Ginny replied.

Harry shook his head. "So he'll torture it out of him. He's a supreme Legilimens."

"So is Aberforth." Dumbledore replied. "But I'm still going to worry. The last time I spoke with him he told me that he thought he knew where the cup resided and that he was going to go after it as soon as he worked out the final details. Then last night he was captured. Something is brewing, something big and if Voldemort finds out what I've been doing, something bigger will happen."

"Why are you telling Ginny and I all of this now?" Harry asked. "You could have brought it up loads of times, especially last year with the prophecy? Why now?"

Dumbledore sighed. "I didn't want to drop more weight on your shoulders, Harry. It's bad enough that you know that you're destined to kill Voldemort or he shall kill you so I thought that if maybe I could get some things out of the way, like these pesky horcruxes, it would help you out."

"And me? Why did you want me to know?"

"Because you played an important role in destroying a horcrux and because you are just as close to Voldemort as Harry is. Not only because of what happened in the Chamber but because you love Harry. Your love will play a big role in the outcome of good versus evil."

"My love?" Ginny asked.

Dumbledore nodded. "Love helped Harry defeat Voldemort the first two times and it will be love in the end that does it again. There is a room in the Department of Mysteries that is kept locked at all times. It contains a force that at once is more wonderful and more terrible than death, than human intelligence, than forces of nature. It is also,



perhaps, the most mysterious of the many subjects for study that reside there. It is the power held within that room that you possess in such quantities and which Voldemort has not at all. That power took you to save Ginny in your second year and that power also saved you from possession by Voldemort because he could not bear to reside in a body so full of the force he detests. In the end, it mattered not what your powers were, but what your heart is. Love saves you, Harry."

Harry nodded. "Alright, so what would you like Gin and I to do?"

Dumbledore smiled. "Thank you. First things first, we need to find out where that cup is. Ginny I could really use your help here."

"Me?" Ginny asked in surprise. "How am I supposed to help out here?"

"You can help. But before you can I need you to do me a favour. Do you remember a little trip you made to Tibet?"

Ginny glanced at Dumbledore in surprise. "How did you know that I went to Tibet? I wasn't even there that long."

Dumbledore smiled. "Li Chung is an associate of mine. She owled me to tell me that she had met you. It was a short visit, I know, but what did she teach you?"

Ginny smiled. "She taught me how to further go about in my healing skills. She took what I learned and helped me refine them. It was basically just a test and I was with her for less then a few hours."

"Yes, you were. But she remembered you and respected you." Dumbledore replied. "Ginny, there's something that I've been meaning to ask of you since I found out what you did with Lily. Are you up for it?"

"Anything that will help Harry."

Dumbledore smiled warmly. "This will help more then Harry. First of all, I need you to take a portkey to Tibet and convince Li that I need her here. Once she comes, contact Miss Stanton. Between Emma

and Li, they will be enough for you to stay grounded.”

“Stay grounded?” Ginny asked.

“What do you want her to do?” Harry asked.

“I need some information that a young man has. A young man, who by all accounts is guaranteed to never gain his memory back. Something that hurts one of your friends to no end.”

“I’m not following you, sir.” Ginny replied. “What am I doing? How am I going to bring out this information?”

“The information that I’m looking for pertains to the cup. No one else has the power that you do. It will take a good portion of your strength which is where Emma and Li come in.” Dumbledore replied. “I want you to bring Frank and Alice Longbottom back.”

Ginny’s mouth dropped open. “W-w-what?”

Dumbledore nodded. “You heard me. Neville has suffered enough without his parents. You brought Lily Potter back and I know that you can bring the Longbottoms back. They will be able to help aide in this investigation for information. We have to find this cup and destroy the horcrux before Voldemort learns of it from Aberforth. Well, Ginevra, what do you say?”

Ginny turned to look at Harry, her hand clasped tightly in his. “What do you think?”

He smiled and leaned down to kiss her softly before whispering in her ear so that only she could hear him. “Do you think that you can do it?”

“I know I can. And it would make Neville so happy.”

He brought her hand to his lips. “I have faith in you. I’ll even be there if you want.”

She smiled. “I want you there. I need you there too.”

"I promise I'll be there."

She turned to grin at Dumbledore. "Alright, I'm in. How am I getting to Tibet?"

Dumbledore grinned. "Thank you." He picked up the tea pot off of the cart and muttered, 'Portus' under his breath. "It's scheduled to leave in five minutes. It should bring you straight to her flat."

Ginny grinned. "Alright."

She kissed Harry goodbye and then they waited for the portkey to activate. Once she disappeared, Dumbledore turned to Harry. "Now I need you to go back to Potter Manor."

"Go back?" He asked.

Dumbledore nodded. "While Ginny is busy getting Li to come over here I need you to tell James and Lily everything that I have just told you. Bring Remus, Tonks, Sirius, and Lexy in on it as well. Can you handle that?"

Harry nodded. "Of course, sir, it just doesn't seem like much."

Dumbledore smiled. "It's more than much, Harry, once they understand we'll have to get to work from there. One more thing."

"Yes, sir?"

"I'd like for all of you to join the Order as soon as possible, Mr. Weasley, Mr. Longbottom, Mr. Malfoy, Miss Lovegood, and Miss Granger as well. We'll have to get that all settled in. But having you on board will help."

Harry grinned. "Thanks, sir."

Dumbledore sighed. "We need help for this; with only those we trust the most. Because we, Mr. Potter, are going to embark on a horcrux hunt."

## Chapter 74: Explaining

**Author's Notes:** Yorkshire accents are awesome! And so weird to think that Canadians have an accent – I didn't know that I had an accent!

haha - love ya saz

plz review! i know this chapter is short but too bad lol jk!

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## Chapter LXXIV — Explaining

Harry stepped out of the fireplace into the entrance way of Potter Manor. He still was slightly shell-shocked over all of the information that he had heard. Yet even though the news had been shocking, he wasn't surprised. He supposed that it was natural for Voldemort to try to do anything in his power to escape that fate of death. He dusted himself off before he headed into the kitchen, grinning when he saw Maddy baking treacle tart.

"Yum, my favourite. Did you know I was coming?"

Maddy turned around in surprise and grinned. "Harry! No, I is not knowing. James is wanting some treacle tart too. What is you doing here?"

Harry grinned. "I need to talk to Mum and Da about something. Are they home?"

Maddy nodded. "Yes. Lady Lily is in the living room but James is at the office."

"Thanks Maddy." He reached around her and stole a piece of the dough. "Yum."

"Hands out!" She exclaimed, making him grin as he hurried out of the kitchen, licking his fingers.

He stepped into the living room, still finding it odd to see his Mum curled up in a chair with a book in her hands. "Hey Mum."

Lily glanced up in surprise. "Harry, what are you doing home?"

He walked over to kiss her cheek before he sat down on the chesterfield. "I was sent by Dumbledore actually. I need to talk to you, Da, Sirius, Lexy, Tonks, and Remus about something."

"James went into the office. He and Kingsley wanted to go over the attack about Aberforth." Lily explained.

Harry nodded. "Alright, well, I'll contact him. Everyone should be here for this. It's very important and concerns Aberforth actually."

Lily looked at Harry in alarm. "You're worrying me. Is everything alright?"

He smiled. "It's fine. It's only that some serious discussion about Voldemort needs to take place." He pulled out his mirror and quickly contacted all of the Marauders asking them to come. Once they had confirmed that they would be there soon, he turned back to his mother. "Dumbledore asked Sirius to send Ginny and I to Grimmauld Place for a serious discussion. I'm supposed to go back there for the night but I guess he wouldn't mind much if I spent the night here."

Lily nodded. "No, I suppose not. Are you sure that everything's okay?"

"In the sense of me, yes, but not so much in other things. Ginny's in Tibet right now trying to get some woman to come back for the first part of the project."

"Tibet?" Lily asked in surprise.

"Aye. She should be back later." He looked up when Remus and Tonks walked into the room; Tonks had Daniel in her arms. "Hey! Wow look at this guy." He walked over to Tonks to take the baby from her. "He's gotten so big!"

Daniel had definitely gotten pretty big. His hair was a dark brown and now he looked so much less like a red potato. He was chubby and adorable in his blue overalls and white sweater. Harry planted a small kiss on his cheek as Daniel yawned and cuddled himself contently on his shoulder.

Tonks smiled. "I know! I can't believe how fast he's growing! He's already just over six weeks old."

Harry grinned. "Hey Dan, remember me?" Daniel blinked and his hand grabbed tight to Harry's finger making him grin. "I'll take that as a yes."

Remus smiled. "Now Harry, while we're thrilled that you missed Dan, do you mind telling us what's going on?"

"I can't just yet, not until everyone gets here. I only want to go through it once as it's a very long story."

Tonks nodded. "Understandable. When I answered the mirror you told me that it was about Aberforth. Has there been any news?"

Harry shook his head no as he moved his hand around, grinning when Daniel continued to hold his finger tightly. "No, not in the sense that one would hope. It's about information that he was keeping."

Remus nodded. "I see."

Lexy came in next, holding Sirius' hand. "Hello."

Sirius grinned. "Lily-Love! Moony! Nymph! Well this is a surprise!" He replied in a mockingly sarcastic voice.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Right. Well as soon as Da gets here I'll explain what happened."

Sirius nodded. "Okay, so where's Ginny? I'm pretty sure I sent her with you."

“She’s in Tibet apparently,” Lily replied.

“Tibet? Is she going to see that Li woman she met?” Sirius asked.

Harry nodded. “Yeah, Dumbledore needs her here and he thinks that Ginny will have better persuasion.”

Lexy sighed and sat down, leaning back against her husband when his arm draped comfortably around her. “I suppose she might if she studied with her.”

Tonks turned to smile at Lexy. “Well, since we’re being kept in the dark until James gets his arse in here, how are you feeling? Still getting sick?”

Lexy shrugged. “Not so much anymore, no. Every once in a while, if I don’t give myself enough time to digest I feel a little nauseous but I’m alright.”

“Not showing yet?” Tonks asked.

Lexy shook her head. “Not quite yet. I think I gained like two pounds but it’s not enough to tell. I’m only thirteen weeks along.”

Sirius grinned and turned her head so that he could kiss her deeply. “You’re so beautiful.”

She smiled mischievously as she stayed cuddled against him. “I know.”

Harry was still holding Daniel comfortably, grinning down at him from time to time. Sirius grinned at him wickedly. “Hey Harry, have you seen any dragons lately?”

Harry glanced up at his godfather quizzically. “Um no?”

“Shame.” Sirius replied, grinning from ear to ear. “Those horntails, they can be pretty sexy.”

“I never knew you liked dragons, Padfoot,” Remus replied, glancing at

his friend in surprise.

Sirius shrugged. "I don't usually but sometimes they can be pretty ... what's the word I'm thinking of ... interesting? Horntails can be found in some really great places? Ask Ginny, right Harry?"

Harry gave him a puzzled look. "Sure."

James walked in then, looking a bit ragged. "Sorry I'm late, everyone. King thought he may have had a lead on where Aberforth was being kept. But it was a false alarm."

Lily smiled at him as he walked over to kiss her softly. "It's alright. We're all just curious about what our son has to say."

James nodded as he took a seat next to Harry. "So what's going on?"

Harry sighed as he handed Daniel back over to Tonks. "Something huge. Do you guys know what horcruxes are?"

Tonks nodded. "Souls, aren't they?"

James shook his head. "No, their parts of someone's soul. To make one, one must commit murder. What about them?"

"Voldemort has some."

Sirius swore. "Doesn't it just figure? We got any idea where the horcrux is? He probably hid it real good right?"

"Oh, more than good. He made seven."

"SEVEN?" The room exclaimed as a whole.

Harry nodded. "From what Dumbledore told Ginny and I, he believes that Voldemort has made seven and from what I understood is that to destroy Voldemort, one must destroy all of the pieces of his soul first."

"Damn," Sirius muttered. "That could take us fucking years to complete!"



James nodded. "We would have no idea where to look."

"Well, the good news is that some of them have already been destroyed." Harry explained. "We only have three more to go, technically, as Voldemort himself would be the final one."

"What happened to the other three?" Lily asked.

"They've been destroyed. I destroyed the first one in my second year unknowingly. I know now that Dumbledore obviously suspected and understood exactly what it was."

James nodded, his eyes lighting up in understanding. "The diary."

"Aye. Dumbledore thinks that it was probably one of the first if not the first horcrux that Voldemort created. With a part of his soul in it, he was able to control Ginny to a higher degree. When I sank the poisonous basilisk fang through it, the horcrux was destroyed."

Sirius sat up a bit, crossing his ankles in front of him. "So you destroyed the first one? Does Voldemort know this?"

Harry shrugged. "I have no idea. I would assume that he knows about the diary through Lucius, but even if he does I doubt that he would believe that we knew what it was."

James shook his head. "No, I don't think that's right. There's no way that Lucius would have told Voldemort about the diary. He blundered that big time!"

"That makes sense," Remus replied. "He wouldn't want to be held responsible for what happened so as long as Voldemort doesn't know, the secret's safe."

"Well, I don't know, but when I asked Dumbledore he said that because the piece of his soul was literally ripped from his body he wouldn't feel the horcrux being destroyed." He explained.

"So what are the other two?" Lily asked.

“Well, Da, apparently you destroyed one last year.”

James glanced at Harry in surprise. “When?”

“I’m not sure exactly when but Dumbledore mentioned that he found Slytherin’s ring in the Gaunt House and he asked for your help in destroying it and you did with no questions asked. The ring was a horcrux. Two down.”

“Well, I’ll be damned! The old man was already hunting them and he didn’t ask for help?” Sirius asked.

Harry shook his head. “He said that I have the prophecy hanging over my head and he wanted to be able to help me in some way and by destroying the horcruxes he was doing that.”

“What made him change his mind now?” Lexy asked. “I mean, why is he telling you this now and not before when he told you about the prophecy?”

“Aberforth,” Tonks replied softly. “It all involves him, doesn’t it?”

Harry nodded. “He’s been involved since the beginning and I think he had a lead on where to find another one. Dumbledore’s afraid that Voldemort will discover that he is searching for them. As long as he doesn’t know, we’ll be safe.”

“And the third?” Lily asked. “That one was destroyed how?”

“Sirius,” Harry replied. “Dumbledore found it, the locket of Slytherin. He immediately knew there was a lot of dark magic on it.”

“He asked me to take a look at in October,” Sirius murmured. “He told me it wasn’t only because I was the DADA teacher but because my father had used many dark spells to hide things and to keep people out so I was knowledgeable. He asked me to destroy what was inside of it. I did, no questions asked.”

Harry nodded. “That’s what he said.”

“What about the rest?” Lily asked. “How are we supposed to find them? I assume Albus wants our help if he instructed you to tell us?”

“Aye he does. I don’t know where to find the others but Dumbledore has some theories on what they might be which helps narrow it down considerably. The locket of Slytherin was stolen from a woman named Hepzibah along with the cup of Helga Hufflepuff. It’s the cup that Aberforth was working on. To follow pattern, he believes that the next one is something of Gryffindor’s or something of Ravenclaw’s. The final one he says is his snake, Nagini.”

“A snake?” Lexy asked. “I wasn’t aware that a horcrux could be placed inside of a living thing.”

Sirius nodded. “Me neither. Is he sure about that?”

“As positive as Dumbledore can be, yes, he is. He insists that Nagini be the last horcrux to go after before Voldemort himself as if we killed his pet snake I think that that would tip him off for sure.”

Remus managed a small chuckle. “And supremely piss him off.”

“Aye.”

Lily sighed. “So what does he want us to do?”

“Well, first of all, Dumbledore thinks that he knows who knows where the cup can be found other than Aberforth, which is where Ginny comes in.”

Lexy glanced at him questioningly. “What do you mean?”

Harry sighed. “Frank Longbottom.”

James stared at Harry for a moment, his eyes dark. “She’s sure she can do it?”

“Aye. That’s the reason she’s in Tibet to bring this woman Li Chung back to help her. She needs a lot of support to stay grounded and

between Emma and Li she should have it. I'm going to be there too. She's going to do both of them." Harry replied.

"Do what?" Sirius asked.

Remus rolled his eyes. "Sometimes, Padfoot, you are so thick. I hope to Merlin that your daughter has your wife's brains."

Lexy smiled. "Why thank you, Remus! It's nice to know that I'm not the only one praying."

Sirius rolled his eyes. "Ha ha, very funny guys, but really, what's Gorgeous going to do?"

Lily swallowed before she stood up. "She's going to bring them back like she did for me."

Sirius whistled. "That's some serious shit."

"Are you absolutely positive that she can do it, Harry?" James asked. "I mean, Lily was sick, but Frank and Alice ... they're so much worse. And I saw her ... the explosion of power radiating from her ... she was so weak that she could barely stand afterwards."

Harry nodded. "She's not going to be alone."

"Harry, that's going to be hard for you to watch, someone else better be there to hold you back."

"What do you mean, Da?"

Lily sighed. "Ginny never told you exactly how she brought me back, did she?"

Harry shook his head. "No. What happened?"

Lily stood up to sit next to him. "It's very intense magic Harry. She ... how do I put this delicately?"

"You can't," James replied. "Harry, she takes the pain into herself.

The horror subjected, the pain, the injuries ... she feels everything.”

Harry swallowed. He hadn’t expected that. He wasn’t sure exactly what he thought she had done to bring his mum back but it wasn’t anything that intense. This sounded dangerous. “She believes that she can do it, so I do too. I’m going to be there for her every step of the way and she’ll have two people to help her.”

Remus nodded. “She’ll be alright, Harry, and as long as you keep thinking that you should be alright. Are you going to tell Neville?”

“I haven’t really thought about it to be honest. I guess I have to.”

Sirius shrugged. “That depends on you though. I mean, to tell him that Ginny can bring his parents back and then if something goes wrong and she doesn’t ... it would crush his hopes. Maybe a surprise is the best route.”

Lily shook her head. “No! He can’t not know! The poor boy would be shocked out of his life if his parents were suddenly there again!”

“I don’t know. I think it’s best if you tell him about it. Neville can be there to hold Harry back when Ginny goes under,” Remus replied.

Harry nodded. “I remember how angry I was when I found out Mum was alive. I know it’s different because Nev goes to see his parents, but I think he should know.”

“It’s up to you, Harry,” James replied.

“Aunt Lexy, Aunt Tonks, what do you guys think?” Harry asked.

Tonks shrugged. “I agree with Remus, I think he should know what’s going on.”

Lexy nodded. “I agree but at the same time, if God forbid something goes wrong ... Sirius is right, he would be devastated.”

Harry sighed. “I guess I’ve got a bit to think about then.”

James nodded. "I guess you do. Alright, why don't you tell us everything else Dumbledore said and then I guess we better figure out where the hell to start? He doesn't want the Order in on this, I take it?"

Harry shook his head. "No, only a few select people. Including Ron, Hermione, Draco, Neville, and most likely Luna as she helped in the Department of Mysteries."

"Alright, Harry, why don't you start from the beginning?" Lily replied. "How did Dumbledore find out about the horcruxes?"

Harry sighed. "You guys might want to get something to drink because this could be a long night."

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Ginny fell on the ground in a heap when the portkey dropped her down. She recognized the room immediately as the place where Li had sat and asked her to review everything that she had learned from Emma. She stood up and placed the tea pot on the table before she wandered into the kitchen. She smiled when she saw Li sitting at the table.

Li Chung had short spiky black hair and big brown eyes. She was small in build and height and very pretty. She turned at the sound and her eyes lit up at the sight of her.

"GINEVRA! Well, this is a surprise!" She hurried over to hug her and Ginny grinned.

"Hey, it's a surprise for me too."

Li sighed. "Dumbledore sent you, didn't he?"

Ginny nodded as she took a seat at the table. "Aye, how did you know?"

"I had a feeling that he was planning something when I mentioned you and he commented on how close I felt and my opinion on your

abilities.”

“I see. Well, I need your help.”

Li stood up and brewed a pot of tea, pouring them each a cup before she nodded. “I’m all ears; tell me what’s going on?”

Ginny nodded. “Well, in a nutshell, there’s a very serious thing going on in the U.K. with Voldemort, evil wizard guy?”

Li nodded. “I’ve heard of him. Even here his name is greatly feared.”

“Well, we’re working on ways to destroy him and one of the things needed is known by a friend of mine’s father who’s mind is so destroyed that even Legilimency cannot get the memory out.”

“Ah,” Li said softly. “Dumbledore thinks that you can heal his mind.”

“I can.” Ginny replied. “Lily Potter had the same problem and she was in a coma. I brought her back.”

Li glanced at her in surprise. “Well, I knew you had power but that’s impressive. You’re positive that you can do this man as well?”

Ginny nodded. “And his wife. I plan to bring them both back in one go. But to do so I need to stay as grounded as possible. I need energy and I need power and I need support. Between both you and Emma, I could handle it.”

“So you want me to go back to London with you and help you heal this couple?” Li asked.

Ginny chewed her lip nervously. “Um, yeah?”

Li sighed. “If I wasn’t so damn impressed with your powers I’d tell you to get the hell out.” She sighed again. “When do you need me to go?”

Ginny jumped up and let out a whoop of joy. “Thanks Li! And well ... now would be good?”

Li laughed. "Alright, just let me pack my bag."

Ginny grinned. "Thank you. We have to go see Emma after this. She's staying at Order headquarters."

Li nodded. "Alright."

Within ten minutes, Li was packed and ready to go. She made a portkey out the tea pot that Dumbledore had used and they landed in the middle of the living room of Grimmauld Place. Ginny wasn't sure who was more surprised, her or the people she had caught snogging and half undressed on the chesterfield.

Emma grinned. "Well, hello Ginevra, darling, and Li too, um, what a surprise?" She fixed her shirt and yanked her skirt down, pushing at the handsome freckle-faced man above her.

Charlie grinned sheepishly. "Always were a pest, Shortstop, can't you see that I was a little busy?"

Ginny goggled at them and then she grinned and threw herself at Charlie and then at Emma. "Oh, this is wonderful! You two would be so perfect for each other!"

Charlie paled. "Uh, yeah, listen I got to ... see you girls later."

Ginny followed him into the kitchen, leaving Emma with Li. "I didn't mean to interrupt, you know?"

Charlie nodded, dragging his fingers through his hair in an attempt to tame it back down from the mess that Emma had made with her hands. "Yeah, I know."

"I'm really glad that you and Emma are together. Charlie, she's like a sister to me, that big sister that I was never able to have growing up. You two are really good together."

Charlie sighed. "Listen, Shortstop, Emma and I, it's just a fling. Don't pin your hopes on this, we're just ... hell you're old enough ... it's just sex."



Ginny smiled. "Whatever you say." She stood on her toes to kiss his cheek. "See you later."

She hurried back into the living room in time to see Emma turn to her. "Both of them?"

Ginny nodded. "You know I can do it, Emma."

Emma sighed. "Knowing is one thing ... Ginevra this is powerfully intense stuff. Are you sure?"

"Will you be there with me?"

"Of course."

Ginny smiled. "Then I'm sure."

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Ginny floored to Potter Manor after settling Li down in a spare room in Grimmauld Place. Dobby and Winky had really made the house presentable in the last year and a half and the guest rooms were truly beautiful and comfortable. They had spent an hour discussing the healing of Frank and Alice Longbottom before Ginny headed to the manor. She was ready to go and she knew that tomorrow she would be nervous but it would have to be done.

She smiled when she stepped into the living room and saw Harry holding Daniel as everyone talked around him. "Hello."

Everyone turned to look at her and Sirius grinned. "Well, hey Gorgeous, what's this I hear about healing the Longbottoms?"

Ginny grinned. "I'm going to try. I believe that I can do it." She took a seat next to Harry who placed the baby in her arms. "Wow, he's getting so big!"

Tonks smiled. "I know."

Conversations erupted around the room again as Harry turned to Ginny. "Well, how did it go?"

"Li agreed. She suspected something from her last talk with Dumbledore and was more than ready to come along. I've got her settled at Grimmauld Place with Emma. Did you know that Emma and Charlie are sleeping together?" She asked.

Harry shrugged. "No, but Charlie couldn't keep his eyes off of her at Christmas."

Ginny laughed. "That's true."

"Gin, question for you?"

She turned to smile at him, taking his bottle of butterbeer from his hand to take a sip. "Sure."

"Sirius told me to ask you, do you think Horntails are sexy?"

Ginny choked and spluttered, swallowing her drink at the last second before she spit it out. "W-w-what?"

He shrugged. "Just wondering. He asked me if I'd seen any good dragons lately and then went on about Horntails being sexy. It was weird, just thought you might know the meaning."

Ginny shook her head no, her face burning. "No, no, I have no idea." She turned to glare at Sirius from across the room. He was a dead man.

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## **Chapter 75: Working the Magics**

**Author's Notes:** Please review.

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## **Chapter LXXV — Working the Magics**

Ginny was nervous when she woke up the next morning and the feeling didn't seem to want to go away. Even as she stepped out of the steaming shower that she had been in so long that she marveled at the fact that she hadn't drowned, she was nervous. She knew that she shouldn't be as she was more than confident in her abilities, but it was the enormity of what she was planning to do. She hadn't had time to think about it when she healed Lily, but this ... she had time to plan and to think about it. She took a deep breath before she continued in her morning routine trying to concentrate on something other than what she would be doing. She had just finished drying and styling her hair when there was a knock on her bedroom door.

She walked over to open it and smiled warmly at Harry. "Hey."

He grinned and stepped inside the room, leaning over to kiss her softly. "Hey. How are you doing?"

She shrugged and then she sighed and allowed herself to be folded comfortably in Harry's arms. "I don't know."

He kissed the top of her head as he held her. "You don't have to do this, you know. No one is making you."

She shook her head, her face buried in his chest. "Of course I have to! Harry, I have this ability, this wonderful ability to bring Neville's parents back to him. How can I not do it?"

"You've thought of this before, haven't you?"

She nodded. "Yeah, after the holidays I seriously started considering it and I was going to ask you about it, see if you would come with me. I planned to try it in the summer."

He looked down at her in surprise. "You're heart is so big, Gin, I know that you can do this."

"Thanks, it's nice to know that you believe in me."

He grinned and tilted her chin up so that he could kiss her softly. "I need to talk to you about something."

She nodded, pulling him over to her bed to sit down. "Alright, what's going on?"

He sighed. "It's nothing really big or anything, but I've been thinking about Sirius and you and things that he's been saying ... I know that you're keeping something from me, Gin, something that has to do with your thigh? What's going on?"

She blushed. "Sirius is just being ... oh, I'm so paying him back for putting these wacky ideas in your head!"

He laughed. "Ginny, you know that there is something more here than some wacky ideas." He slid his hand down her hip gently and onto her thigh. "What's the secret?"

Her breath caught in her throat and her heart pounded as she thought about his reaction. She tried to ignore the soft rubbing of his fingers on her thigh and damn him for finding just the right side and spot. "Well, I ... hmm, I had the perfect way to tell you about it and you're ruining my surprise."

He grinned and leaned down to nuzzle her neck. "Spill it, babe, and tell me what horntails have to do with it?"

She laughed and debated. Should she just blurt it out? But she really wanted him to find it. She sighed; he wasn't going to let up. "Well, Harry, you see, it's-

"Hey Ginevra, are you ready to go?" Emma asked as she stepped into the room.

Ginny hopped off the bed and nodded, thankful for the excuse. "Yes."

Emma nodded. "Come on. Li and I want you to do some serious meditation before you go in there. It might take a few hours."

Ginny nodded and leaned down to kiss Harry goodbye as he grabbed

her wrist. "I'll find out sooner or later, you know."

She grinned. "Later is better. I'll see you, Harry."

He watched her go and he sighed. Just what did Sirius know about her thigh?

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Neville sat at the table in the Great Hall eating breakfast. He wondered again what Dumbledore had wanted Harry and Ginny for the night before as he knew that neither one of them had returned to school yet. He hoped nothing bad had happened. Ron and Hermione didn't know anything either.

He sighed and glanced around the hall, his eyes falling on the dirty blonde head of Luna Lovegood. It was hardly the first time that his gaze had drifted that way. She was really pretty and she was funny even if she was a bit of whacko, Loony Luna and all that jazz. But he liked her, a lot. Especially since she had really proven herself last June in the Department of Mysteries; Luna had surprised all of them really. He hadn't expected her to go but she was there and she had fought brilliantly. He'd thought about asking her out a few times but her last boyfriend had been MacDougall and he really didn't think he could compete with that. They had broken up before Christmas, shocking most of the school who hadn't even known they were dating. He scowled slightly at the dark haired boy sitting at the Ravenclaw table before turning to his hash browns.

"Are you alright, Neville?" Hermione asked, glancing over at him in concern.

Neville nodded and tried not to scowl at Morag anymore. "I'm fine. Just thinking about stuff is all."

Hermione nodded. "I see. You know, Neville, I don't think Luna would mind so much if you asked her to Hogsmeade for Valentine's Day."

Neville snorted, blushing and not even bothering to try to figure out how Hermione knew what was on his mind. She always knew. "I'm

not her type. She may be bloody crazy but Morag went out with her.”

“You’re too hard on yourself, Neville. You’re very handsome and very smart.”

Ron leaned over towards them. “I wouldn’t argue with her, mate, you’ll never win.”

“Ron!” Hermione exclaimed.

Ron shrugged. “Just telling the bloke the truth.”

Hermione huffed in exasperation. “Fine. But I’m telling you, Neville, it won’t hurt to try, you know. What’s the worse that can happen? She’ll say no.”

Neville nodded. “Alright, I’ll think about it, okay?”

Hermione smiled. “Good.”

He finished up his breakfast and was just getting ready to leave when he looked up in surprise. Dumbledore was standing in front of him. His hands shook a little beneath the table but he managed to stop them by locking his hands together.

“Good morning, Mr. Longbottom, may I have a word with you in my office?” Dumbledore asked.

Neville nodded. “Yes, sir.”

He got up to follow Dumbledore and he smiled. “No, you can finish your meal first, let’s say twenty minutes?” When Neville nodded, Dumbledore smiled. “The password is ‘Three Musketeers’.”

He walked away, leaving Neville staring after him in surprise. He drank the rest of his juice before he turned to Ron and Hermione. “What do you suppose that’s about?”

Ron shrugged. “I don’t know.”

Neville nodded and said goodbye before he headed up to the dormitory to grab his books. On his way back down he rammed directly into Luna, knocking her over and sending his books flying.

“Ouch!” Luna exclaimed as she fell back onto her bum.

“Oh, Luna, I’m sorry! I wasn’t paying attention.”

Luna smiled. “It’s alright, but you better be more careful. If you don’t watch where you’re going you might get eaten by a shackle bug.”

Neville nodded. “Right.” He stood up and then reached down to help her up. She took his hand and stood up in front of him. He gulped slightly. “Well, I have to head to Dumbledore’s office, but I’ll um, I’ll see you later.”

Luna sighed. “Are you ever going to ask me out?”

“W-w-what?” Neville spluttered.

“You’ve liked me for ages. I know I’m not imagining things. I thought after the Department of Mysteries adventure you would but nothing came of that so then I came back to school and I was dating Morag and still you never said anything. I catch you staring every now and again and Ginny and Dee tell me that you definitely fancy me, so why won’t you ask me out?” Luna asked, all in a very matter-of-fact no-nonsense voice.

Neville gulped. “Well, I, I mean, I ... um ...” He could feel his face heating up in embarrassment.

Luna sighed. “Alright, we’ll do it my way.” She stood on her toes and brought her lips gently to his. “Will you go to Hogsmeade with me on Valentine’s Day?”

Neville nodded meekly.

Luna grinned. “Good. See you later, Neville.” She waved goodbye and headed back down the hall.

Neville stared after her in shock. He wasn't even sure exactly what had happened. Then he grinned, he had a date with Loony Luna Lovegood for Valentine's Day. Nothing made him happier. He practically skipped up to Dumbledore's office. He knocked on the door softly and when he heard come in, he pushed thought of Luna back and wondered just what Dumbledore wanted.

"Come in, Mr. Longbottom and take a seat. We're just waiting for another party to arrive."

Neville nodded and sat down, trying not to twiddle his thumbs. A burst of flame came in the fireplace and Harry stepped out. "Harry!" Neville replied in surprise.

Harry gave him a small smile. "Hey Nev, how's it going?"

Neville grinned. "Great! I'm going to Hogsmeade with Luna." He blushed then, realizing what he had just said in front of Dumbledore.

Dumbledore chuckled. "Ah, young romance. Come in and sit down, Harry."

Harry nodded and took a seat next to Neville, mouthing congratulations before turning to Dumbledore. "Sir."

Dumbledore sighed and leaned back in his chair. "Where do I begin? Neville, I need to ask you some questions, some very personal questions."

"O-okay," Neville replied nervously, glancing from Harry to Dumbledore.

"If you would rather that Harry not be here, I can ask for him to come back." Dumbledore replied.

Neville shook his head. "No, it's fine. I want Harry to be here."

Dumbledore nodded. "Alright, Neville what do you remember about what happened with your parents?"



Neville looked slightly taken aback for a moment. "Well, I, I don't really remember anything. I have some nightmares sometimes but I don't know if it's real or not."

"What do you dream?"

Neville shrugged. "Bellatrix Lestrange, her husband, and a man that I don't know come into the room. They demand of my father how he found it and when he refuses to answer they turn their wands on him. My mum screams and then they start demanding things about Voldemort. Like, how did Harry kill him? I don't remember much after that just torturing and I always wake up right after the Cruciatus is turned on me. I don't know if it actually happened. The dream has gotten more detailed as I've gotten older."

Dumbledore nodded. "Immensely. Neville, you visit your parents often, don't you?"

He nodded. "Yes, during every holiday and on their birthdays and when I'm not in school my grandmother and I go once a week."

"What do the healers say about their condition?"

Neville's eyes had hardened now. "They say that their minds are vegetables and that there is no possible way for them to be healed."

"What if I told you that there is a way for them to be healed?"

Neville paled now, his hands gripping the sides of the chair so tightly that his knuckles turned white. "What do you mean?"

Harry spoke now, turning to face his friend. "He means, what if you could have them back the way that I got my mum back?"

"I-I don't understand."

Harry sighed. "Nev, Ginny brought my mum back remember? She was incredible and she has this healing ability that no one has had in centuries. She's positive that she bring your parents back to normal, bring them back to you."

Tears filled up in Neville's eyes. "Truly, she can do it?"

Harry nodded. "There's a chance that it might not work but the worst that could happen is that they stay the way they are now. But she says that she can do it and I believe her. She wouldn't say it so fiercely if she didn't think that she could."

Neville turned to look at Dumbledore now. "Why?"

Dumbledore sighed. "There's a mission, Neville, one that I started many years ago and now need help with. Death Eaters have captured my brother and if Voldemort manages to break through his mind, he will know what we're doing. I believe that Frank has information that can help us."

Harry shook his head. "Neville, I talked to Gin, she's been trying to build up the courage to tell me that she wanted to give your parents back to you. She planned to talk to you and to try it in the summer. Dumbledore just gave us the opportunity to try it now."

"Ginny has a big heart."

"I know." Harry replied. "So what do you say, Nev?"

He shrugged. "I don't know what to say. How can she do it?"

"I don't know. But from what my da told me, it's pretty intense and it takes a lot out of her. I'm going to be there for her but by the sounds of what Da told me, I'm going to need someone to hold me back. It hurts her." Harry explained.

"And you want me ...?"

Harry nodded. "I do."

Neville nodded. "When?"

"Pretty much now," Harry replied.

Neville gulped. "Alright."

Dumbledore nodded. "You deserve to have your parents, Neville. Ginny has only recently learned about her powers and she is without a doubt the only person who can heal them. They are in good hands."

Neville nodded meekly. "What about my grandmother?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "I'll speak to Augusta, but right now, she doesn't know what's going on."

"Alright. So when do we leave?"

Dumbledore stood up. "You can go now."

"Are you coming, sir?"

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, I have no business there. I'll go later on."

Neville nodded. "I don't even know ... this is all so unbelievable."

Harry nodded. "I know, I still have trouble believing sometimes that I have my mum back. Let's go, Nev."

Dumbledore handed them a portkey and they both grabbed a hold of it before they landed squarely in the rooms of Frank and Alice Longbottom. Neville gulped a bit and Harry placed a hand on his shoulder.

"I can't imagine what this is like. I mean, I didn't witness what happened with my mum." Harry explained.

Neville nodded. "Will it hurt them?"

Harry shook his head. "No, they'll be fine."

Neville's eyes turned sharply to Harry's. "But it will hurt Ginny?"

Harry nodded. "I think so, yeah, which is why my da said that if I was

to be here I would need someone. He seems to think that I'm going to flip out or something."

Neville grinned. "I'll work on holding you back if it comes to that."

"Thanks." He looked up when the door opened and Emma, Ginny, and Li stepped into the room. "Hey."

Ginny walked over to them and kissed Neville's cheek. "I'm pretty sure I can do it, Neville."

He smiled at her. "Even if you can't, it means a lot to me that you'd try."

Ginny nodded and then turned to wrap her arms around Harry. He held her close for a minute and then he kissed her softly. "For luck."

She smiled. "Thanks."

Alice Longbottom stepped out from behind the curtain. "Hello dears, I didn't realize that we had visitors today. I'm afraid that Frank is sleeping." She explained. Her dark honey blonde hair was pulled away from her round pale face, so much like Neville's and her blue eyes were smiling, even if they weren't quite focused.

Ginny smiled at her. "Hi, Mrs. Longbottom, why don't you sit down here and talk with us for a while?"

Alice nodded and took a seat as Neville and Harry started rambling until the nurse came in. Harry recognized Tonks immediately, even though she was well disguised as the nurse. Her hair was dark brown and pulled back in a bun on her head. Her nose was longer and her eyes were green but she still looked like Tonks in the cocky sway of her hips and the grin.

She winked at him before she turned to Alice. "Come on Alice, we're going to go outside for a while in the court yard and get some fresh air."

Alice looked at her in confusion. "But I just got company."

Neville reached over to squeeze her hand and she dropped a bubble gum wrapper in it. He blushed but tucked it in his pocket. "It's okay, Mum. We'll wait for you to come back."

This seemed to satisfy Alice and she let Tonks lead her out of the room. Emma turned to Ginny then. "Come on, Ginevra, let's go."

Ginny nodded and they all headed back to where Frank was. He was sleeping soundly on the bed and Ginny was thankful as she figured that it would make things a lot easier all around. She carefully sat on the side of the bed, unsure about what to do. She had spent the entire morning meditating with Emma and Li, working to focus her magic and her energy together and to keep it strong. She closed her eyes for a moment to take a deep breath. From the corner of her eye she could see Harry and Neville leaning back against the bedroom door watching her. Emma and Li clasped hands tightly and the energy sparkled.

"Ginevra, you know what to do," Emma replied.

Li nodded. "I didn't see you before but I know that you know what you're doing. Are you ready, Ginny?"

She nodded. "I-I think so." She reached out to pick up Frank's hand in hers and Emma grabbed her other hand. The power of the connection zipped through her and just like it had with Lily, the extent of the damage zapped through her and she stiffened, her eyes darkening in a swirl of mist as she flew into his mind, to the memory of how he had become how he was now.

*"Al, there's nothing we could have done and you know that! You've got to stop blaming yourself." Frank exclaimed, throwing his arms up in the air in frustration.*

*Alice nodded, tears in her eyes. "I know that in my heart but my brain is telling me something different. She ... Lily was one of my best friends. I can't believe she's gone. That sweet little boy will have to grow up without his mum."*

*Frank sighed and walked over to wrap his arms around her, his eyes following his son who was crawling around on the floor happily.*

*"James will take care of Lily. She may not know what's going on, Ice, but she's there for a while at least. Besides, Voldemort's vanished."*

*"For now. Dumbledore doesn't think that he's gone."*

*Frank's eyes darkened. "He's not."*

*The sound of glass breaking caused the two of them to whirl around. Bellatrix and Rudolphus Lestrage as well as Barty Crouch Jr. stood there, wands ready; the windows in the front were broken and shattered across the carpet. Frank instantly stepped in front of his wife. "Get the bloody hell out of my house."*

*Bellatrix smiled. "Why should we? We know that you have the answers to our questions? Isn't that right, Rudy?"*

*Rudolphus nodded. "It's very right, Bella. Shall we torture the wife first or the little brat?"*

*Frank's eyes hardened. "Your fight is with me. Leave my wife and son out of this!"*

*Bart sneered. "Right, like we'd do that. We all know that the best way to get the truth out of a man is to go for his heart. Am I right, Bella?"*

*"Such a sweet boy." She pointed her wand at Neville, who Alice had picked up into her arms. "Shall I torture him or should I rip him limb from limb?"*

*Alice paled and snuggled Neville closer. "Don't you dare touch my baby!"*

*Frank gulped. "Go Al, go get Neville safe."*

*Bellatrix sneered. "Crucio!"*

*The curse hit Alice and the pain was so intense, her body bending in ways it shouldn't that she dropped Neville. Frank caught his son in*

*time and placed him in the play pen nearby. "Stop it! What do you want?"*

*"Where's the cup, Longbottom? Our master was planning a mission on us finding it and he heard about you discovering it." Rudolphus explained.*

*Frank shook his head. "I don't know where the cup is. I don't even know what cup you're talking about."*

*"Crucio!" Crouch yelled as Frank fell to his knees.*

*Neville was crying in the crib now, alerted by the horrified and painful screams coming from his parents. Alice was sobbing now, on her knees.*

*"Leave him alone! We don't know anything!"*

*Rudolphus sneered. "You don't know anything do you? Pity." He grabbed a fistful of her hair and dragged her up to her feet. "How did the boy do it then? How did he cause our master to disappear? How do we bring him back? Can you answer that? You were friends with the Potters after all, were you not?"*

*She whimpered. "I-I don't know. No one knows!"*

*Frank managed to drag himself to his feet now, his wand in his hand. He blasted Rudolphus back, slamming him into the wall. "You leave my wife alone, you sodding bastard!"*

*Rudolphus laughed. "You hear that, love, I'm a sodding bastard?"*

*Bellatrix laughed. "I already knew that, Rudy." She turned her wand back on Alice. "Crucio!"*

*Rudolphus used the same curse on Frank as Crouch continued to demand answers to the questions. Ginny could feel the pain as it hit her body. When the curse wasn't giving them answers, Crouch resorted to beating Frank's body. She could feel the pain of the blows smacking her and she gasped out loud as blood dripped from her*

nose and her arm.

Harry took a step forward. Her eyes were glossed over and her body was jerking as if she was being hit. Blood spurted from her nose and cuts appeared on her arms as she gasped in pain.

“Stop her! It’s killing her!” He demanded.

Emma shook her head. “No, Harry, you knew that this was going to be hard!” Her eyes drifted to Neville for a moment before she spoke. “She’s experiencing everything that Frank did the night he lost his memory. It will be over soon.” She winced. “It was more than horrible.”

Neville grasped Harry’s arm firmly and when he turned to look over at him his face was dead pale. “She’s right, Harry; Ginny w-wouldn’t want you to stop.”

Harry merely stared ahead, watching her, hoping that it was over soon. Emma and Li were wincing from time to time and he wondered if they could see what she was seeing since they were connected.

Ginny shrieked in pain as the blackness fell around Frank at the last curse. She could hear voices murmuring above her about whether to kill him or not. Screams continued and then everything went completely dark. Flashes flew behind her eyes of being moved to the hospital; of not understanding why he didn’t remember anything; of not knowing how to feed himself; of being told his son was here to see him when he didn’t remember having one. Then the flashes stopped and she found herself in a warm common room furnished similar to the Gryffindor common room. Frank was sitting on the couch, a book in his hand. His dark brown hair was windblown a bit and his blue eyes were focused on the book in his hand. He looked up when she sat down.

“Hello beautiful, and who might you be?”

She smiled. “My name’s Ginny.”

“Well, hello, Ginny, I’m Frank. What brings you over here? You know,



Ice and I don't get many visitors?"

"Ice?" Ginny asked.

Frank nodded. "My wife. Her name is actually Alice but when we were in school I used to call her the Ice Queen because she wouldn't give me the time of day, her eyes were all for my friend Alvin Donald in Ravenclaw and now I just like to do it to annoy her. She's out for a walk at the moment."

Ginny nodded. "I see. Listen Frank, I'm here to help you."

"Help me?" Frank asked, chuckling. "I hardly think that I need any help."

She shook her head. "How old are you Frank?"

"Me? I'm nineteen and newly married. Did I tell you that Alice is pregnant? We're very pleased."

Ginny sighed. "Frank, I'm afraid that something terrible has happened."

"Is it Ice? Is Al alright?"

Ginny nodded. "She's alright. But she's in the same trouble as you. You're not nineteen years old but actually thirty-six and your son Neville is sixteen."

He laughed. "That's a good one."

"I'm not joking, Frank. Voldemort hurt you." She saw the flash of recognition pass through his eyes before he quickly masked it.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Yes, you do. You knew about the cup of Hufflepuff; where it was and how to find it and you knew that it was important to Voldemort, but you didn't know why. The Potters were attacked and Lily was injured badly. Alice was worried about her. Some Death Eaters came to your

home and broke in. They attacked your family.”

Frank stood up now, his eyes dark and angry. “That’s a lie! I-I wouldn’t let them hurt my family!”

Ginny shook her head. “Of course you wouldn’t let them, but it was three against two and they threatened your baby boy. You fought back but they used the Cruciatus on you and your wife. The pain was so intense that they broke your mind.”

Frank shook his head in denial, his fists clenched tightly at his sides. “No, no, no, no, no.”

“You remember, but you don’t want to remember.”

“Why are you here? Why are you doing this to me?”

“Because we need you back now, Frank. We need you and Alice back with us. It’s been fifteen years and no one has managed to bring you back. Neville needs you. He needs his father. I can help you come home.”

Frank stared at her for a minute. “It’s my fault.”

“What’s your fault?” Ginny asked.

“They hurt her and I didn’t stop them. I didn’t stop them. It’s my fault.”

Ginny shook her head. “No, it’s not your fault. You couldn’t have stopped them. Come on, you can see Alice, and you can tell her that it wasn’t your fault. All you have to do is come with me.”

He cocked his head to look at her now. “You’ll bring me back to my wife and son?”

She smiled. “Yes, I will.” She held out her hand, holding a smile on her face. “Trust me.”

He reached out and clasped his hand in hers. The world spun around them and pain ripped through her as she was yanked from his mind.

A huge wall of red fire power gushed out from around her just like before but this time, she could feel something holding her back. She couldn't come through and Frank was stuck. She needed power, more power. She focused her energy on the search and a lick of red fire spun out and plowed through Harry. He flew back against the wall and a light of bright green erupted from him and exploded into Ginny. She gasped and collapsed as Frank's eyes opened.

Harry gasped as he crawled over to her, his heart pounding and aching from the force that she had thrown at him. "Gin?" He whispered.

She moaned. "Did I do it?" Then she passed out in his arms.

He kissed her cheek and looked over at Frank who was sitting up now. His eyes met Neville's and they widened. "Neville."

Tears rolled down Neville's cheeks as he nodded and walked over to him. "Dad."

Frank pulled him forward in a big bear hug. "You look so much like my Ice. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." Tears rolled down his cheeks as he held his son tightly.

Neville nodded. "It wasn't your fault! Gran will be so happy."

Frank kissed Neville's cheek and then he turned to look at Ginny who was passed out in Harry's arms. "Is she alright?"

Emma nodded. "She'll be fine. We just need to get some potions into her and she'll be ready to go. Harry, can you carry Ginevra into the other room?"

Harry carefully scooped her up into his arms as Frank placed a hand on his shoulder. "You'd be James' boy?"

Harry nodded. "Aye."

Frank smiled. "And Lily?"

“She’s good as new. Thanks to Gin here. She’s my miracle worker.”

Frank smiled. “I don’t know how she brought me back. She forced me to remember. She tore through my nightmare. I should feel weak and ... I feel energized, good as new.”

Li nodded from behind them. “It’s because she took all the pain and the sadness and the horrors into herself. It left you with her energy.”

He nodded. “How can I ever thank her for this?”

“You can’t and she wouldn’t want you to.” Harry replied. “She did this for Nev, he’s our friend.”

Frank grinned, his arm draped comfortably over Neville’s shoulders. “Nev, I like that. Where’s Alice?”

Emma began to pull some potions from her bag as Harry lay Ginny down on the couch. “Tonks took her out for a walk so that we could work on you. As soon as Ginny gets her strength back we’re going to bring her back.”

“You’re sure you can do it again? That had to have taken a lot out of her?”

Emma smiled. “Ginevra will be fine.”

Magic was sparking from her fingertips as Harry rubbed his chest from the pain that the magic had caused. She had ripped it out of him. He couldn’t explain it. He didn’t understand how or why she had done it. He watched as Emma forced countless potions down her throat and her eyes fluttered open.

“Did I do it?”

Harry knelt down next to her and brought her hands to his lips. “Of course you did.”

She reached out and placed her hand over his heart. She winced slightly and the pain that he felt vanished.

“Ginny, don’t you’re weak.” He replied, realizing that she had taken the pain from him.

She smiled. “It’s already done. I’m sorry about that. I needed ... I needed more power and you were the strongest person in the room.”

He nodded. “I get it. How do you feel?”

“Tired.”

He kissed her softly. “I bet. You rest here for a while.”

She nodded. “Will you hold me?”

He smiled and lifted her up to cuddle her into his lap as he took a seat. “Sure.”

She snuggled into him, his arms wrapped comfortably around her. She drank another potion from Emma and then closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

“Will she be okay?” Harry asked.

Emma nodded. “Yeah, she just needs a few hours to sleep it off. She used a lot of power there, more then she did with your mother. She even borrowed power from you.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I noticed that.”

“Has she ever done that before?” Li asked. “I’ve never seen another person grab power the way she did from another.”

“We shared our magic,” Harry replied.

Emma nodded. “That makes sense. You’re connected and she needed power, more energy to bring Mr. Longbottom completely out the way she did. She connected instantly to the three of us but you were the most powerful, so she took from you.”

“Makes sense.” Harry replied as Ginny snuggled a bit closer. “She needs a few hours?”

Emma nodded. “Yeah. You’ll take care of her while we check over Mr. Longbottom and have him released?”

“Yeah. I’ll take her back to the manor.”

“Good plan. Let her rest and when she wakes up we’ll figure out if we’re to bring Alice back tonight or tomorrow. It depends on her,” Emma replied.

“Got it.” Harry watched as Frank and Neville left the room, followed by Emma and Li. He glanced at the floo powder they left for him and shrugged. He transformed into a phoenix and using his magic to hold her to him he disappeared in a ball of flame, appearing in his bedroom in Potter Manor. He changed back into himself and carefully tucked her into his bed. She rolled over and snuggled into the pillows.

Harry curled up in a chair next to the bed with a book and he just watched her for the longest time. She had power that he had never imagined. The intense focus of those chocolate brown eyes and the pain and horror that had rushed through them as her body jerked in pain had shocked him. The energy sparking from her had been intense and powerful enough that he could feel the heat from across the room. And the fire — it was like red fire that erupted around her and before he had been able to fully concentrate on it the lick of power had ripped through him and he had felt a wave of power leaving him.

He rubbed his hand over his chest. It didn’t hurt anymore but he remembered the feeling. She had ripped it from him. He looked up when the door opened to his room. Lily stood there.

“Hi, I just spoke to Emma and she said that you were coming back here.”

He nodded. “Yeah. Gin needs to sleep it off for a while. It was ... it was pretty intense.”

Lily walked over and leaned down to run her fingers through his hair. "I know." She kissed his cheek. "If she needs anything let me know."

"I will. Mum?"

Lily turned to smile at him. "Yes honey?"

He smiled. "I love you."

Lily's eyes softened. "I love you too."

He watched her leave and his eyes fell on Ginny again. He'd take care of her alright and after this healing thing was over he was going to find out the story about her thigh because if his suspicions were anywhere close to the truth, it was going to be an interesting adventure.

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## Chapter 76: Working the Magics on Alice

**Author's Notes:** okay so i know the ending is a cliffy but i just had to do it - i couldnt resist:D dont hate me lol  
plz review!!  
PS - Kate dont kill me!

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## Chapter LXXVI — Working the Magics on Alice

Harry woke to the sound of a soft voice murmuring his name. He fixed his glasses which had slumped down his nose when he had fallen asleep in the chair and he looked at his bed. Ginny was snuggled into his pillow, a big smile on her face and his name was coming from her lips. He grinned broadly and wondered just what exactly she was dreaming about. He crawled onto the bed next to her and just watched her for a moment. She was so beautiful.

He wasn't sure exactly what it was about her that made her so

beautiful but she never failed to take his breath away. He knew there were lots of girls with red hair but he had never noticed the golden blonde and fiery streaks in their hair. Ginny's hair was like wild fire and it felt like silk in his hands. It was one of his favourite features. The dusting of light gold across her nose was beautiful too of course, even though she hated them. She wasn't one to wear a lot of makeup but he knew she used something to try to hide the freckles on a regular basis. She was the girl next door with the charm and the attitude but her beauty was breathtaking. Her big chocolate brown eyes opened and she smiled up at him.

"Good morning," she murmured, stretching in the big bed as she smiled over at him.

Harry lay down next to her and grinned. "Morning. Good dream?"

She grinned. "The best. Why do you ask?"

He shrugged, dancing his finger down her arm. "Just wondering. Want to tell me about it?" He asked, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

She laughed. "Did I talk in my sleep or something?"

"Not really, but you did make this incredible moaning sound with my name in it."

She blushed and he grinned, leaning down to kiss her softly. "Well, I think you'll just have to imagine what I was dreaming about."

He grinned. "Oh, I think my imagination's pretty good."

Ginny laughed and sat up, stretching a bit and then running her hands through her long hair. "Good to know. Why am I in your bedroom?"

He shrugged. "No special reason. I just came here and put you in my bed and you went to sleep. I wanted you there."

She smiled. "The sheets smell like you."



He glanced at her quizzically. "Is that a good thing?"

She laughed. "Yes." She curled into him so that he could hold her close. "I really did it, right? It wasn't a dream?"

He wrapped his arms around her, cuddling her back against his shoulder. "You really did it. Frank Longbottom is back. Neville was thrilled."

She smiled warmly. "I'm so glad. We need to talk, about what happened."

He nodded. "I get what happened, Gin, you told me. It makes sense. You needed more power and I was the strongest person there. You pulled from me."

"I'm going to need you today. More than just to be there. We need to connect. I was drawing power from Emma and Li yesterday as well but if Alice suffered even half of what Frank did ..." she trailed off, shuddering slightly.

"Baby, what did you see?" Harry murmured as he held her close.

Ginny closed her eyes as she thought about what she had witnessed. "It was horrible. What they did, I mean, they didn't know anything yet they were being tortured."

"Was it the Cruciatus?"

Ginny nodded. "Mostly and some severe beating. Frank tried to stop them from hurting Alice and Neville and they beat him. Kicked him and hurt him so badly!"

"You were hurt too." Harry murmured. "Your body ... it was convulsing as if you felt every punch and your nose started bleeding, cuts on your arms." He reached down to lift up the sleeves of her shirt. "And now they're gone. It was amazing. You're amazing"

"I don't remember that. I was trapped inside of his mind. I had no idea

about what was going on around me.”

“I almost stepped in. When you started to convulse and ... I almost did. I demanded that they stop you but even as I said it I knew I couldn't do it. Neville was incredibly pale but he grabbed my arm and he said that you would be angry if I stopped you. It was intense, Gin.” He explained, leaning down to kiss her neck.

She sighed into him. “I can imagine. I needed to regroup after that. Lily was ... she was hurt Harry but she wasn't hurt that badly. She was hurt so bad and she almost ... it was like she closed herself off in her mind to avoid the pain and then when she was ready to come back she couldn't find her way out again. Frank was ... he was put there. He didn't remember what happened and when I brought it up I saw recognition in his eyes even as he denied it. It was different. It was intense.”

“I'll be there today for you in every possible way.”

She smiled and reached up to cup his cheek. “I know you will be. We need ... I think I would be stronger if we shared magic first, Harry.”

“Isn't that our secret though? We've never done it in front of anyone?”

She nodded. “I need you, Harry. Once we connect as long as I have physical contact with you it flows through us.”

He wiggled his eyebrows and grinned. “Physical contact, eh? Just how exactly do you plan to bring Alice back?”

She slapped his arm playfully. “Prat.”

He grinned. “I'll do anything you need me to.”

Ginny smiled and cuddled back against him. “I need you there. That's all, I just need you there.”

“Always.” He turned her face to his so that he could kiss her just as his bedroom door opened.

Lily stood there with a goblet in her hand. "Sorry to interrupt. How are you feeling, Ginny?"

Ginny smiled. "Good. I just needed to sleep it off mostly. I'll be ready for later. What's that?"

Lily smiled and took a seat on the bed next to them. "It's a potion that Emma gave me. She said it will increase your strength and help you for the second onslaught of magic that you'll be doing. She thinks it won't make you quite so weak later on." She handed it to her as Ginny wrinkled her nose at it.

"It smells funny."

Harry laughed. "Drink it anyway. Pomfrey's always shoving smelly potions down my throat."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Maybe if you didn't get injured so often you wouldn't have this problem."

He stuck his tongue out at her. "Just drink it."

She pinched her nose and gulped down the potion. "That actually didn't taste too bad."

Lily smiled. "I added a bit of chocolate into it. It makes potions taste better but never affects the potion itself."

Ginny grinned. "Brilliant!"

Harry nodded. "Definitely, Da never did that when I was little."

Lily laughed. "You're father avoids potions period at least most of the time. Except for the Wolfsbane."

Harry nodded. "That's understandable."

Lily smiled as she stood up. "Well, why don't you two get showered and dressed. Ginny, Emma wants to see you as soon as you're ready. She mentioned something about mediating before you work on Alice."

Ginny nodded. "Alright, thanks."

Lily smiled. "No problem."

Harry watched his mother leave the room before he turned and kissed her softly on the lips. "There, now I feel better."

She laughed. "Prat! Now let me go so I can go take a shower."

He grinned. "Okay."

She climbed off the bed and stretched. "I'll need you in that room."

He nodded at her. "I'll be there." He watched her leave and when she closed the door behind her he sighed. "Always."

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Neville was in shock. There were no other words to describe it. Yesterday had been the most amazing day. He had gotten his dad back. It been awkward at first, once everyone had left, but he remembered every detail with a smile on his face. He lied in bed now in one of the spare rooms of Potter Manor, remembering.

They had left the room afterwards and left Harry to take care of Ginny. Then they had gone to Grimmauld Place to talk. He remembered feeling odd; what was he supposed to say to him? He hadn't had a father in fifteen years! But Frank had made it easy. He had closed the door behind them so that they had the common room to themselves and then he had turned around and said:

"So Nev, what the hell have you been doing with your life?"

He had laughed. He hadn't been able to stop. Soon Frank was laughing with him too. "Dad, I — I don't know what to say."

Frank nodded. "That's understandable. I'm not sure what to say either. I don't remember you coming to visit me. The last thing I remember is placing you in the play pen and telling those bastards to leave us the

hell alone.”

Neville nodded. “How do we ... I’m not even sure how to approach this?”

“Me neither. Why don’t you tell me a bit about yourself? What house are you in?”

Neville grinned. “Gryffindor.”

Frank sighed. “Well, I guess that’s okay. Ice was in Gryffindor.”

Neville smiled. “You were in Ravenclaw, right?”

Frank nodded. “Yeah. Mum was pretty disappointed in that. She said I should have been in Gryffindor and I told her it wasn’t my fault if I had the brains.”

Neville laughed. “Gran was disappointed that I was in Gryffindor. She said I wasn’t following in your footsteps.”

Frank shrugged. “That woman is never happy! You live with her, right?”

“Yeah. Granddad died when I was six. He fell off the roof. Gran yelled herself hoarse for him being such an arse about actually being on the roof and he just grinned at her. He died a few days later though of a heart attack.” Neville explained.

“I see. So ... you’re friends with Harry then?”

“Yeah, he’s one of my best friends. Gran used to bring me to the manor all the time to play with him. James didn’t like him going out in public too often because of the whole Boy Who Lived thing.”

“That’s still going on?” Frank asked in disbelief. “That started right after Voldemort’s downfall.”

Neville nodded. “It’s still going on. Harry’s famous.”

“And that pretty little redhead who brought me back?”

“Ginny Weasley, Harry’s girlfriend.”

Frank grinned. “Arthur and Molly’s daughter — blimey! A Weasley hasn’t had a daughter in the family in seven generations!”

Neville grinned. “They do now. Ginny’s their seventh child, the only girl, and the youngest. Ron Weasley is the same age as me, Ginny’s a year younger. We’re all in Gryffindor.”

“What’s your best subject?”

“Herbology.”

Frank smiled now. “That was always Alice’s favourite. I watched that woman do the most extraordinary things with plants. You must get your talent from her. Herbology was my worst subject.”

Neville grinned. “What’s was your best subject?”

“Defence against the Dark arts.” He said with a grin. “I don’t know if you knew this, but I was two years ahead of your mum in school. I fell in love with her in my seventh year; she was in fifth and completely ignored me. I called her Ice Queen and she’d get so angry. Anyway, as soon as she finished her seventh year, we got married. She went to Auror School. I had already finished and well ... we were young and with the war going on. It was difficult times.”

Neville nodded. “I didn’t know you were older. I just assumed you and James and Lily and Mum and Sirius and Remus were all the same age.”

Frank grinned. “They are. I’m just two years older than them.” He sighed. “Alright, are you going to tell me what’s going on?”

“Going on?” Neville asked.

Frank nodded. “Yeah, going on. The war, Neville?”

“It’s here. Voldemort came back to life, well I suppose he was never really gone but he got his body back. It’s beginning slowly. Dumbledore ... Dumbledore said that you had some information that would help in the war. Something about a cup and Ginny ... she brought Lily back before Christmas. She was in a coma. He knew that she could help you and Mum.” He explained.

“I see.” He closed his eyes for a moment. “I don’t want to have to think about the war yet. I’m just ... I’m tired.”

Neville nodded. “We’re staying at Potter Manor for the night. Let’s go.”

Frank had simply nodded and followed his son out of the room. Neville grinned as he thought about it. He climbed out of bed and placed a hand over his jittering stomach. If he felt excited over the thought of having his father back ... by nightfall he would have his mum back too.

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By noon, everyone was back at St. Mungo’s to see Alice. Emma, Li, and Ginny had spent the morning meditating and Harry had waited for Neville and Frank before leaving. Frank and Neville sat down in the corner to wait as Ginny headed over to Alice. She was lying in bed where the healers had told her to rest for a while. She wasn’t sleeping but Ginny knew that she wasn’t fully conscious either. She looked up at Harry and he nodded at her.

He yanked her close to him and took both her hands in his — holding them palm to palm, fingertip to fingertip and when he brought his lips down to hers he could feel the power flowing through him and into her. Colours of red and gold and green and blue sparked from their joined hands, but neither one of them noticed. They were quite lost in each other’s kiss. Harry let go and kept his hand in hers before he reached for Emma’s hand and she for Li’s. Ginny let out a deep breath before she took Alice’s hand in hers. The damage ripped through her instantly and her dark brown eyes widened at the contact. She felt Harry jerk next to her and she knew that he was seeing everything that she was before her brain shut off and she was sucked into

Alice's mind.

*Alice was standing in a pretty living room as Neville crawled around on the floor. Her honey blonde hair was pulled back out of her face and she was talking to Frank about the Potters.*

*"Al, there's nothing we could have done and you know that! You've got to stop blaming yourself." Frank exclaimed, throwing his arms up in the air in frustration.*

*Alice nodded, tears in her eyes. "I know that in my heart but my brain is telling me something different. She ... Lily was one of my best friends. I can't believe she's gone. That sweet little boy will have to grow up without his mum."*

*Frank sighed and walked over to wrap his arms around her. Alice cuddled into them instantly, sighing in pleasure at the feel of his strong arms. "James will take care of Lily. She may not know what's going on, Ice, but she's there for a while at least. Besides, Voldemort's vanished."*

*"For now. Dumbledore doesn't think that he's gone."*

*Frank's eyes darkened. "He's not."*

*The sound of glass breaking caused the two of them to whirl around. Bellatrix and Rudolphus Lestrange as well as Barty Crouch Jr. stood there, wands ready; the windows in the front were broken and shattered across the carpet. Frank instantly stepped in front of his wife. "Get the bloody hell out of my house."*

*Bellatrix smiled. "Why should we? We know that you have the answers to our questions? Isn't that right, Rudy?"*

*Rudolphus nodded. "It's very right, Bella. Shall we torture the wife first or the little brat?"*

*Frank's eyes hardened. "Your fight is with me. Leave my wife and son out of this!"*



*Crouch Junior sneered. "Right, like we'd do that. We all know that the best way to get the truth out of a man is to go for his heart. Am I right, Bella?"*

*"Such a sweet boy." She pointed her wand at Neville, who Alice had picked up into her arms. "Shall I torture him or should I rip him limb from limb?"*

*Alice paled and snuggled Neville closer. Her eyes darted to her husband and back. She knew that he was trying to protect her but she wasn't sure if that was what she wanted. "Don't you dare touch my baby!"*

*Frank gulped. "Go Al, go get Neville safe." She shook her head stubbornly. How could she leave him here alone?*

*Bellatrix sneered. "Crucio!"*

*The curse hit Alice and the pain was so intense, her body bending in ways it shouldn't that she dropped Neville. It ripped through her and she thought she heard a cracking of a bone as her head exploded in pain. Frank caught his son in time and placed him in the play pen nearby. "Stop it! What do you want?"*

*"Where's the cup, Longbottom? Our master was planning a mission on us finding it and he heard about you discovering it." Rudolphus explained.*

*Frank shook his head. "I don't know where the cup is. I don't even know what cup you're talking about."*

*"Crucio!" Crouch Junior yelled as Frank fell to his knees.*

*Neville was crying in the crib now, alerted by the horrified and painful screams coming from his parents. Alice was sobbing now, on her knees.*

*"Leave him alone! We don't know anything!" She begged, trying to reach carefully for the wand that she had dropped when the first curse had hit her.*

*Rudolphus sneered. "You don't know anything, do you? Pity." He grabbed a fistful of her hair and dragged her up to her feet. She cried out at the pain but didn't make another sound. "How did the boy do it then? How did he cause our master to disappear? How do we bring him back? Can you answer that? You were friends with the Potters after all, were you not?"*

*She whimpered. "I-I don't know. No one knows!"*

*Frank managed to drag himself to his feet now, his wand in his hand. He blasted Rudolphus back, slamming him into the wall. "You leave my wife alone, you sodding bastard!"*

*Rudolphus laughed. "You hear that, love, I'm a sodding bastard?"*

*Bellatrix laughed. "I already knew that, Rudy." She turned her wand back on Alice. "Crucio!"*

*Alice screamed as she fell but the curse was lifted quickly and she was instead rewarded with watching her husband jerk and twist on the floor. Then Crouch started using his fists and his feet, beating her husband to a pulp. She reached for her wand again but her arm was blasted out of the way, blood gushing from the intensity of the spell. She cried out and her worst fears came true when Frank's body became lifeless and he wasn't moving. Her breath hitched as she stared down at him in shock.*

*Bellatrix grinned. "Oops, Rudy, I think that you might have gone a bit too far there."*

*Rudolphus smirked. "He's not dead yet. He's just a little unconscious. I can fix that though."*

*"NO!" Alice shrieked. "Leave him alone! He doesn't know anything!"*

*Rudolphus knelt down in front of her and grabbed a handful of her hair, jerking her towards him. "But you know the answers, right?" She whimpered and he tugged harder. "What do you know, Alice? What do you know about the cup? What do you know about the Dark*

*Lord?"*

*"Nothing. We know nothing! Please, please just let us go."*

*Rudolphus laughed. "Let you go!" He grinned wickedly at his wife. "Bella honey, why don't you and Crouch take that baby out of here for a few minutes? I'd like a few minutes alone with Mrs. Longbottom."*

*"No!" Alice shrieked. "My baby! Leave my baby, please, don't hurt him! He hasn't done anything."*

*Rudolphus grinned. "As long as you talk we won't hurt him. We have no problem with the child."*

*This seemed to calm her down a bit because her eyes met his. "I don't know anything, I swear. If Frank knew anything he never told me. The only thing I know about the Dark Lord is that Harry Potter caused him to vanish."*

*Rudolphus placed his hand on the collar of her shirt and ripped downwards. "My, my, Mrs. Longbottom, you are well built."*

*She let of a sob. "Please."*

*He grinned. "No, I'm tired of listening to you beg." He struck out so that his hand bashed her cheek and she fell backwards. "Now we do it my way." He crawled on top of her and she screamed.*

Ginny was yanked from the image but she could feel the pain. She was confused at first as to what had happened but then she knew. Alice had shut her mind off. She could feel the pain but she had shut her mind off instantly. It was probably done due to shock. She could feel the ripping of her most sensitive area and she knew that the damage had been far more worse then she had known. When the pain stopped and there was nothing more then a throbbing pain between her legs and all over her body, she couldn't see anything but she could hear voices.

*"Rudy! Did you have to shag her?" Bellatrix exclaimed.*

*"No, but I enjoyed it."*

*"Let's get out of here."*

*"Wait," Rudolphus replied. "Crucio!"*

Ginny felt the pain rip through her again and then the world went black. Images flashed through her mind. Healers were looking at her and commenting on the damage. She didn't want to open her eyes, she was afraid of what she would see. The images continued of the suite in St. Mungo's and Frank holding her hand. Neville coming to visit but she didn't know who he was. Then the images changed and she found herself a room she didn't recognize. Alice was sitting in a chair, knitting and humming to herself.

"Alice," Ginny replied as she stepped forward.

Alice smiled up at her. "Hello, who are you?"

"I'm Ginny Weasley."

Alice nodded. "It's nice to meet you. Have you seen Frank? He went out to get some groceries and I haven't seen him come back."

Ginny nodded. "He won't be coming back. He wants me to take you to him."

Alice shook her head and bit her lip nervously. "Oh no, I don't want to leave. It's nice here."

Ginny smiled and took a seat next to her. "Why?"

Alice shrugged. "Frank proposed to me here. We snuck out of Hogsmeade and went to London. I don't know how he managed it but we rented a hotel room and we made love all day. It was so wonderful and then he asked me to marry him, down on his knees with a red rose between his teeth. He looked so ridiculous, naked as a jaybird and his eyes grinning at me. We got married less than two months later. We're still newly weds you know. I'm pregnant with our first child. It's a boy. I just know it."

Ginny smiled. "That sounds wonderful. Frank sounds like he was really sweet when he was younger. What's the last thing you remember, Alice?"

"Frank going out for groceries, weren't you listening?" She asked.

Ginny nodded. "I forgot, I'm sorry. Listen Alice, I'm here to help you. I can take you back to Frank and back to Neville."

"Neville?" Alice asked in surprise. "How did you know that I'd picked the name Neville if we had a boy?"

"Neville's a young man now, Alice, he's sixteen years old and he misses you."

Alice shook her head. "No, he's not. He's still here inside of me."

Ginny shook her head. "No, Alice, he's not. Some Death Eaters broke into your home soon after the incident with the Potters and Voldemort. They wanted information, demanded it, before they began torturing you and Frank."

Alice dropped her knitting needles as she placed her hand over her ears, shaking her head no. Her blue eyes were fearful now. "No, no, I don't want to remember that. Something horrible happened."

Ginny knelt down in front of her and took her hands. "They hurt you, Alice. When Frank was hurt and down on the ground they hurt you. One of them raped you. They left you there to die."

"No, no, no," she murmured.

"Yes. You have to admit to it. It happened. And now you're trapped here in your mind. Don't you want to see your husband and your son? They miss you and they need you so much."

Tears poured from Alice's eyes. "Frank won't want me anymore."

Ginny pulled her into her arms. "Of course he will! He loves you so

much! He told me that you are his Ice and he needs you! He'll understand."

She sniffed. "I hate it when he calls me that."

Ginny laughed. "See? He loves you. Come with me. I'll take you back to him and to your son."

"How long have I been like this?" She asked.

"Fifteen years. Frank's been trapped like you were too but now he's home and he's waiting for you to return." Ginny replied.

Alice sniffed, her hands clutching Ginny's tightly. "I want to go home. I want my husband and my baby."

Ginny smiled. "Then just take my hand and follow me."

Alice nodded. She stood up and squeezed Ginny's hand gently. That was all it took. The world started to spin, colours blurring into colours and images fading away. She could hear Harry calling out to her in her mind; could feel his hand holding hers tight and she could feel his power flowing through her, into her, helping her along. The lick of power rushed through her and just like the last two times a huge wall of red fire power emerged around her and Alice, burning with energy. She gasped as it disappeared around her and she felt arms encircle her waist. She leaned back against Harry in relief.

She squeezed Alice's hand gently and her eyes opened. "Ginny?" She asked.

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, I'm right here. Do you want to see Frank and Neville?"

Alice nodded slowly. "Yes."

Ginny let go of her hand as Frank and Neville approached the bed.

"Hey Ice," Frank murmured leaning down to kiss her lips.

Tears welled up in Alice's eyes as she clung to her husband for a moment then her eyes turned to Neville. "My baby," she whispered.

"Hi Mum," Neville replied softly before he melted into his mother's arms.

Ginny managed to stand up now, but Harry's arms were still around her. "It's done."

"How you feeling?"

She smiled. "Better then before. Your powers helped."

Emma nodded. "You still need to go and rest. Li and are heading back to Grimmauld Place after we talk to Dumbledore. Lily has all of the potions you need. Harry will take care of you. You need to rest."

She nodded. "Alright."

They watched Emma and Li leave the room before Harry leaned over to Neville. "Nev? Gin and I are going to head to the manor so she can rest. If you need anything, you know where to find me."

Neville smiled. "Yeah, thanks, both of you. I know those words don't mean anything but ... thank you."

Harry grinned. "Yeah, no problem."

Neville watched them leave the room before he turned back to his parents. Frank had moved so that Alice was curled into him. Neville was sitting across from them, not knowing what to say or do. "Do you feel alright, Mum?"

Alice nodded. "Yes, I feel wonderful, almost energized."

Frank nodded. "It's from Ginny. She takes the pain into herself. Or that's what I understand to happen. You're going to be fine."

Tears welled up in her eyes again. "Yeah ... I remember everything Frank, everything."

“Shh, it’s okay honey.” He gestured to Neville to go to her other side and slip his arms around her. Alice instantly softened, snuggled between the two of them.

“Can we get out of here?” She asked.

Neville nodded. “Yeah, I don’t know if Gran knows yet though.”

“She knows,” Dumbledore replied from the doorway, a purpling bruise on his forehead. “She threw a trophy at me and I’m sorry to say my reflexes are not nearly as quick as they once were.”

Neville laughed. “Gran hit you with a trophy?”

Dumbledore nodded. “She did. Augusta is in denial and most likely on her way here now. She doesn’t believe or she is afraid to believe. Neville, you might want to head her off.”

Neville paled. “Do I have to?”

Frank laughed. “Sounds like Mum. Its okay, Neville, I’ll deal with her when she comes. So Dumbledore, Neville told me a bit about the war. You need the cup?”

“I’ll explain everything in more detail later on. Right now, it’s just good to see you both up and about again.” He turned at the sound. “And I believe that’s Augusta.”

Augusta Longbottom burst into the room, her vulture hat sitting high on her gray hair that was flyaway from the neat bun. Her red hand bag fell to the floor as she stared at them.

“Frank?”

Frank smiled as he stood up. “Hey Mum.”

Augusta burst into tears and Neville’s mouth dropped open. He had never once in his life seen his grandmother cry. Soon she was hugging her son and her daughter-in-law and crying and asking how



this happened; how it was possible. She apologized to Dumbledore again and again as he explained about the talent Ginny had in healing. Neville just watched with a smile on his face. His family was back together.

Dumbledore turned to smile at him as his parents reunited with his grandmother. "Neville, I think they need some time. Are you alright?"

Neville nodded. "Never better."

Dumbledore smiled. "Good. Why don't you head back to school for now? Augusta will get your parents settled in and we'll arrange for you to spend the weekend with them."

Neville grinned. "I don't really want to leave them, sir, but I know that you're right."

"Good. You can use this portkey." He handed him a rubber duck and Neville grinned.

"Thanks, sir."

Dumbledore grinned. "You're welcome."

Neville walked over and hugged and kissed his parents goodbye before the portkey took him back to Hogwarts. He landed in the Great Hall and he grinned. It was empty since it was late by now. It had taken hours for Ginny to bring Alice back. He glanced at his watch and realized it was eight o'clock. He started to make his way back to the common room and then he changed his mind and headed towards the general area of the Ravenclaw common room. He ran into Anthony Goldstein and he grinned.

"Hey Tony!"

Tony turned around and nodded at Neville. "Longbottom, what can I do for you?"

"I was wondering if you could tell me if Luna Lovegood is in the common room." He asked.

Tony shook his head. "Nah, she's in the library. She's never in the common room until after curfew."

Neville nodded. "Thanks."

He headed to the library and found her quickly. She was sitting in a back corner with Demelza and Colin. He approached the table and managed a small smile just as Demelza spoke.

"And here's Prince Charming now!"

Neville blushed. "Er, hi."

Demelza laughed. "We're just teasing, Neville. I'm so happy that you and Luna are going to Hogsmeade together."

Neville nodded. "Well, as long as it's not cancelled again."

"Good point." Colin replied. "I've been deserted and on Valentine's Day too or well, the Valentine's Day celebration trip! Some friends I have."

Demelza rolled her eyes. "Ignore him. He's just jealous because we all have dates."

Neville nodded. "Right. Um, Luna can I talk to you?"

She gave him a dreamy smile. "Sure."

"Good, do you want to go for a walk?"

She nodded and quickly packed up her stuff before taking Neville's hand in hers. He grinned at the feeling of her small hand wrapped in his. It felt right.

"So where have you been the last two days?" She asked as they walked through the halls hand in hand.

"Visiting my parents. Luna ... the most amazing thing happened!"

“What?” She asked, as they stopped in the hallway to talk.

Neville sighed. “Ginny she ... she brought my parents back to me. They were hurt you see, tortured into insanity by Death Eaters fifteen years ago. They didn’t know who I was.”

Luna slipped her arms around him and cuddled close, giving him a warm hug. Neville glanced down at her in surprise as she spoke. “I’m sorry. That must have been hard. But they’re better now?”

He nodded. “Good as new. They remember everything and me and my Gran is getting them settled back at home. It’s like a dream come true.”

She smiled and tilted her chin to look up at him. “I’m so happy for you!”

He smiled. “I love how you talk. It’s this no-nonsense tone that sounds almost dull and not interested but your eyes, they light up with every emotion.”

Luna grinned. “I think you’re the first person to notice that. What are my eyes telling you now?”

He blushed as her hands slid boldly up his chest. “That um, that you want me to kiss you.”

“Good call,” she murmured, standing on her toes to nip at his bottom lip.

“Luna, we can’t not here, we’re in the middle of the hallway,” he replied, glancing around nervously.

She laughed and tugged gently on his arm. “Then let’s go find a broom closet. “I’ve got a terrible urge to snog you senseless.”

He blushed. “Erm, kay.”

She laughed as she tugged him along the hall. They found a broom

closet fairly quickly and by this time, Neville had found his confidence. He pushed her back against the wall next to the door and slipped his hands up her back, leaning down to kiss her softly. She gasped against his mouth and held him closer. She nibbled on his lips and he moaned, turning his head to deepen the kiss and she grinned against his mouth.

“Neville, I didn’t think you had it in you.”

Neville grinned. “I’ve got a lot in me.” He reached behind her to fumble with the door to the broom closet and he yanked it open. To his surprise it wasn’t empty. Ron and Hermione stumbled out, their clothes rumpled, snaps and buttons untied.

Ron’s ears turned red and Hermione’s cheeks heated. “Hey Nev, Luna,” Ron murmured.

Neville grinned. “Prefects in a broom closet. Now this is quite priceless.”

“Neville, you won’t tell anyone, will you? We’re supposed to be patrolling.” Hermione replied nervously.

Ron laughed. “Nev’s not going to tell anyone, Mione.”

Neville laughed as he looked at them. “Well, I’m not going to get you in trouble no, but if you think I’m going to hide this from Harry or better yet, Fred and George, you’ve got something coming.”

Ron groaned. “Not Gred and Forge!”

Neville laughed. “But I think they would enjoy hearing that news?”

Luna smiled. “Enough chit-chat. If you two are done, Neville and I need the closet.”

Hermione’s mouth opened in surprise but before anyone could comment, Luna tugged Neville inside and slammed the door shut. She pressed him back against the door and grinned.

“Now I’m going to snog you senseless. Any complaints?”

Neville grinned as he kept his hands sitting on her hips. “Not one.”

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While Ron and Hermione fell out of broom closets and Neville and Luna locked themselves in them, Harry was lying in bed next to Ginny as she cuddled into him, sleeping soundly. She had taken all of the potions that she was supposed to and now she was just waiting for them to kick in. Harry watched her sleep with a smile on his face. She had done something incredible today and the day before. She was so amazing. He ran his fingers gently through her hair and her eyes fluttered open.

“Hey.”

He smiled at her. “Hey, how are you feeling?”

“Good. It wasn’t as intense of a meltdown since I had you there too.”

He nodded. “So you’re feeling alright then? No aches or pains or anything?”

Ginny gave him a puzzled look before she shook her head. “No, I’m fine. It was intense, what she went through, but I could feel you there in my mind, supporting me. I’m fine.”

He nodded. “You’re really, alright, the potions worked.”

“Yes! I’m good as new.”

He grinned. “Good.” He rolled her over so that she was beneath him and he feasted on her neck.

She gasped in surprise and in desire as his hands slid under her shirt to stroke over her skin. She murmured his name, her hands roaming over his back. He moved up to her mouth, kissing her softly and slowing, dragging out every stroke of his tongue and every meeting of lips until she wanted to scream at the intensity of the kiss. If he was

trying to drive her crazy, he was definitely succeeding. Her entire body was trembling beneath him when he looked into her eyes.

“So Gin, since I’ve got you trapped here beneath me, trembling for me ... what’s on your thigh?” He asked, nipping at her chin and her collarbone.

She grinned. “You never give up, do you?”

He shrugged. “Not when my mind is set.”

She laughed and pushed him over so that she was on top of him. “What’s on my thigh? Well, I guess if you really want to know you’ll just have to find it yourself!”

Harry made a growling sound in his throat as he yanked her mouth back down to his. They rolled across the bed, both of them fighting for control as they kissed. Ginny managed to end up beneath him again and she shivered when his hands slid up the skirt that she was wearing.

“Does it require taking off this deliciously sexy garment?” He asked as he played with the zipper.

She laughed and reached down to unzip it herself. “I’m tired of waiting for you to see it.”

He grinned and gently slid her skirt down her legs. Her sweater was rolled just under her breasts and her red silk panties left a striking contrast against her skin. He slid the skirt all the way off before he turned her a bit, rubbing his finger over her left thigh.

“Hmm, nothing here but delicious freckles.” He leaned down and kissed her skin, causing her to shiver in delight before he turned to her right thigh. “Another splash of sexy freckles. I’m surprised you don’t have as many freckles as I thought by the way. Instead I seem to find them in the most wonderful places.” He turned her legs again and this time his eyes darkened at the sight of the horntail on her right inner thigh, directly below her groin. He gulped as he looked up into her eyes. “Ginny, is this ... you got a tattoo?”

## Chapter 77: Plans

**Author's Notes:** i kno this chapter is short but oh well lol plz review!! i cant get this random song out of my head!: Baby write this down, take a little note. To remind you in case you didn't know, tell yourself i love you and i dont want you to go, write this down. take my words and read them everyday, keep them close by don't you let them fade away, so you remember what i forgot to say, write this down! haha good old George - ok ignore me and plz review:D

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## Chapter LXXVII — Plans

He gulped as he looked up into her eyes. “Ginny, is this ... you got a tattoo?”

Ginny blushed as she looked up into his eyes. They had darkened to a really intense green as he stared down at the horntail. He rubbed his thumb over the dragon and it shimmered, heating up on her skin. It had never done that before and she wondered if it was the tattoo or if it was just the fact that Harry was touching her. “Uh-huh,” she murmured softly.

“A horntail? Dragons? Sirius said horntails can be pretty sexy and found in interesting places.” He murmured.

She nodded. “He’s dead, by the way. I’m going to prank him so bad!”

His eyes flew up to hers. “How the hell did Sirius find this?”

Ginny laughed. “He didn’t find it! He’s never even seen it! I just told him I got it and where! He’s been a right arse about it though and he obviously can’t keep a secret, the git! I’ve got the perfect plan for him.”

Harry nodded and continued to run his finger along the outline of it.

He had played around with the tattoo idea a bit in his mind but he hadn't actually expected to find one. It heated under his hand as he touched the skin.

"Harry?" She whispered.

His eyes met hers again. "Yeah?"

"Do you like it?"

His grin widened and he brought his lips to hers. "It's the sexiest damn thing I've ever seen. I don't know what I like better, the horntail or the bellybutton ring. And you ... damn if I'm not even remotely surprised by it."

She laughed. "Mum doesn't know about the tattoo, she'd kill me."

He nodded. "Oh, she definitely would." He leaned down to kiss it and she gasped, her fingers fisting in his hair, dragging him back up to her lips.

Harry grinned against her mouth as he skimmed his hands up her ribs, deepening the kiss as his calloused hands stroked over her skin. He hadn't been lying when he had said that her freckles amused him. All of the Weasleys had freckles but Ginny only had the small dusting of them across her nose. He was enjoying exploring her body to find out where the rest were hidden. He moved down the column of her throat, smiling as he kissed the creamy white skin and grinning when he found three tiny freckles just below her collar bone.

"See? What did I say? I find freckles in the most interesting places." He murmured as his fingers raked over her jumper and slid it over her head.

The bright red bra she was wearing matched her panties and he gulped when he stared down at her. She had never been that exposed before him before as Harry was pretty sure her swimsuit hadn't been that sexy.

Ginny blushed under his intense stare and he couldn't help but grin



as he watched the blush start at her chest and work its way up to her cheeks. She wrapped her arms around his neck. "I think that you have entirely too many clothes on."

He grinned and yanked his jumper over his head before he leaned down to kiss her softly. "Better?"

She nodded, sliding her hands over his chest as they kissed. It felt good and so right to be lying in his bed, in his arms, barely dressed. She knew that she should stop him or at least cover herself up some more but she didn't want to. She wanted those rough hands to continue to slide gently over her skin and she wanted those pouty lips to meet hers forever.

Harry groaned against her mouth as she rolled him over so that she was on top. He slid his hand up and down her back, his fingers tangling in her hair as he tried to pull her closer. She was driving him crazy. All she wore was the sexy lingerie and the tattoo and bellybutton ring, just the thought of it made him hard. She pulled back to look at him and he knew that she had felt the outcome of their kisses. He grinned at her and brought his lips to her throat as he undid the clasp on her back. Her bra fell away and he gulped as he stared at the exposed creamy skin. He leaned forward to use his mouth just as a loud pounding on his bedroom door caused them to jump apart and for Ginny to bury herself under the covers.

Harry took a deep breath before he spoke but he barely got the words out before the bedroom door opened. Sirius stood there and his eyes widened, noticing the clothing strewn around the bed before he grinned at them.

"Well, well, lookie what I found."

Harry rolled his eyes as Ginny blushed and tossed the covers completely over her head. "What do you want?"

Sirius grinned. "Found the horntail, did you?"

Harry grinned sheepishly. "Go away, Uncle Sirius."

Sirius grinned at them. "I'm going. Listen, you guys got twenty minutes to get ready and I'm taking you back to Hogwarts."

Harry nodded and waited until the door closed and he could hear him walking away before he turned to Ginny. "He's such a dead man."

Ginny giggled. "Yeah, he is. I guess that was ... a little intense though."

Harry nodded. "I'll say." He leaned down to rest his forehead against hers. "I'm not going to apologize though. I want you, Gin. I want you so badly it hurts."

She kissed him softly. "I know. I want you too it's just ... I feel like I'm ready but I'm not, not yet. I don't want to be a tease or anything but I \_\_\_"

Harry placed a finger over her lips. "You're not being a tease. I'm the one that got us into this situation. But let me ask you this, how often do you wear panties and bras like these?" He asked as he held the red silk and lace bra in front of her.

She blushed. "Quite often actually."

He groaned. "Even under your uniform?"

She nodded. "Always under my uniform."

"You're trying to kill me."

She laughed and snapped her bra back on. "No, I'm not, that's just a nice side benefit."

He grinned as she crawled out of his bed and wiggled her skirt back on and then her jumper. He watched her for a moment as she dressed and then went to go stand in front of the mirror to try to fix her hair.

She sighed. "It's messy."

He laughed. "Well, my hands were in it."

Ginny rolled her eyes before she grabbed a quill of his dresser and put her hair in a complicated twist, using the quill to hold it up. "That'll have to do for now."

Harry looked baffled. "How the hell did you manage to do that?"

"What?" Ginny asked as she put her boots on.

"All that hair! You've got a lot of hair yet its holding together with a quill through it?"

Ginny laughed. "Girls are talented that way. Now hurry up and get out of bed."

He blushed. "I need a few minutes."

Ginny bit her lip to keep from laughing. "Oh, okay. I'll meet you downstairs then."

"Gin?"

"Yeah?" she asked.

"I forgot, before when we were ... well, you said something about having the perfect prank for Sirius?"

Ginny grinned wickedly. "Yup. I thought of it a few days ago. It's brilliant."

He grinned at her. "What is it?"

Ginny shook her head. "Oh no, I'm not telling anybody. This will be my little secret."

He sighed. "That's not fair. What if I want in on it?"

Ginny shrugged. "You'll have to come up with your own prank. This baby's mine." She grinned at him, walking over to kiss him softly.

“Don’t be too long.”

He nodded as he watched her go. Then he leaned back against the pillows and sighed. Looks like he was starting his day off with a cold shower.

\*\*\*\*\*

After Sirius brought Harry and Ginny back to school, he returned to Potter Manor with Lexy for a meeting. He couldn’t help but grin on what he had walked in on. He didn’t think anything serious had been happening but the only thing he knew was that Harry needed a pat on the back because from what he could tell from the scattered clothes, Ginny hadn’t been wearing much. But at the same time, Sirius had an urge to punch Harry for going too fast and rushing his so-called goddaughter. He grinned and shook the thoughts from his head, turning his attention back to the room at hand. Remus and Tonks had already arrived and they had brought Frank and Alice with them. James and Lily were seated comfortably on the couch already.

“Alright, so where do we start?” Sirius asked as he made himself comfortable, Lexy curled up next to him.

Frank shrugged. “I don’t even know how you can start. I feel like I’m dreaming. The last thing I remember was being nineteen and now I’m thirty-six with a grown son.”

Lily nodded. “Trust me, I understand the feeling.”

“So these horcruxes?” James began. “Do any of us have any idea where to start looking for them? Dumbledore seems to think that Frank knew at one time.”

“The cup of Helga Hufflepuff. We talked. I don’t know how much help I can really be.” Frank replied, his arm wrapped comfortably around his wife.

Remus nodded. “It’s not about how much help you can be, it’s how much you’re willing to help. We need a lot of power this time. But this time we know a hell of a lot more.”

Tonks nodded. "We have to think about the horcruxes and try to organize how to destroy them and first how to find them."

"Destroying them shouldn't be too hard," Sirius replied. "I mean, James and I already destroyed two. From what I remember, it was a dark curse and once I got past it I just used a breaking charm mixed with the killing curse and well good feelings, or happy feelings. When I did that it made it fly into a million green pieces that exploded into the air. Dumbledore looked pleased even though I didn't know what the hell it was at the time."

James nodded. "Yeah, when I destroyed the one in the ring it did something similar."

"Alright, so we know how to destroy it and that takes a big chunk out of the problem," Lily answered. "But how do we find them?"

"Well, from what I understood from Dumbledore, he believes that the cup of Helga Hufflepuff is one and then something belonging to Gryffindor or Ravenclaw." Frank replied. "But we have no idea what those objects can be."

"From the story that Harry related to me, Voldemort seemed to have a thing for collecting trophies. He wanted memories or valuables. Hogwarts was really his first home therefore the four founders would be of importance, also, there's the fact that he's the heir of Slytherin and I think that plays a role in his choosing such obvious objects. However, we don't know for a fact that a horcrux can be found in the cup of Hufflepuff, it's only a theory. Besides, up to now, everything had been an artifact of Slytherin. The locket, the ring, and the diary was in a way an artifact of Slytherin as well." James explained.

Lily nodded. "That makes sense. So where do we start?"

Remus sighed. "I guess we research."

Sirius groaned. "Homework! You're going to assign homework! I thought we got out of this phase!"

Lexy elbowed him lightly. "Prat! This is important."

He nodded and sighed as if he was giving in against his will. "Alright, so how are we going to do it?"

Tonks grinned. "Let's assign each couple a topic. James and Lily can look into all of the known artifacts of Godric Gryffindor as well as the history. Frank and Alice can look into the same thing but for Rowena Ravenclaw. Sirius and Lexy can look into horcruxes themselves and the possibility of it being in a living thing. Dumbledore seems pretty sure that the last one was placed in Voldemort's snake."

Lily smiled. "That's a good idea. But what are you and Remus going to research?"

"Hufflepuff," Remus answered. "We don't actually know if there's a horcrux placed there but by looking into Helga Hufflepuff's known relics and history we might get a good starting point."

Sirius nodded. "That makes sense."

Frank nodded. "It does, it's a good plan. Anything that we can do to make sure this bastard is gone once and for all is worth it." He smiled at his wife as Alice stayed on his shoulder.

Alice spoke for the first time now. "Then we have to work on gathering up the Death Eaters."

Tonks nodded. "This time we're going to capture them all."

Remus grinned. "That's the plan."

James let out a deep breath and sighed. "Well, now that that's out of the way. Where are you two living?"

Frank grinned. "Leave it to you to lighten the mood."

James shrugged. "I was just wondering."

Alice laughed, her eyes lighting up. "You haven't changed a bit,

James Potter! Still a rogue.”

Sirius looked offended. “Hey! I thought I was the rogue!”

Alice shrugged. “You were both rogues.”

Frank grinned. “Well, anyway, we’re staying at my mother’s house for now but I saw some property a few blocks from here with an incredible house. Al and I kind of fell in love with it. So, we’ll see how that goes.”

Lily nodded. “What did Augusta do with your home before?”

“She kept it but neither one of us wants to live there again.” Frank explained.

Alice shivered. “Too many bad memories. We’d like to start over. Live our life from new.” She grinned as she looked up at her husband. “Maybe even have more children.”

Frank looked surprised by this. “Yeah, that’d be great.”

James smiled. “I bet Neville would get a kick out of having a little brother or sister.”

Alice smiled. “I hope so.”

Sirius grinned, placing his hand on his wife’s stomach. “Man, I still can’t get over the fact that I’m going to be dad.”

Lexy laughed. “You’re going to be a great dad!”

Remus smiled. “Yeah, so, you guys want pizza?”

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When Ginny returned back to school, the first thing that she did was seek out Demelza and Luna. Her head was still spinning from the intense snogging session that she had shared with Harry only an hour before. Sirius had just brought them back to school with a

portkey and she had left Harry with Ron and Hermione fairly quickly. She had dragged Luna and Dee into an empty classroom and after making sure it was private with the proper spells turned to grin at them.

Luna's eyebrow rose slightly. "You're practically bubbling."

Demelza's hand covered her mouth. "You had sex with Harry!"

Ginny blushed. "No! But, well, we did ... it was intense. He found my tattoo."

Demelza squealed. "And?"

Ginny laughed. "He really likes it! I wasn't sure at first, I mean, he was just staring at it and touching it and he wasn't really saying much, murmuring to himself. But he likes it."

Luna laughed. "Well, we knew he was going to like it!"

"I guess, yeah. Oh! It was just so ... Merlin, it was intense! I love him so much!"

Luna nodded. "I know. I've got some news to share as well, which leads up to what we need to discuss."

Demelza grinned. "I wondered when you would get around to telling her." She turned to Ginny with a grin. "I caught them in a broom closet snogging each other's brains out."

Ginny laughed. "Luna! You vixen!"

Luna shrugged. "I try. Well Morag and I broke up before Christmas right, I mean we were not right for each other. So I took your advice and I paid a bit more attention to Neville. He's so shy and cute so one day I just asked him if he liked me. He stuttered and stared so I kissed him and asked him out."

Ginny's mouth dropped open. "You didn't! What happened?"



“He said yes. We’re going to Hogsmeade together and we’ve been inseparable ever since.” Luna replied, a dreamy smile on her face. “But he did tell me what you did.”

Ginny nodded. “It was so ... I can’t quite explain it Luna but it was powerful and I saw everything they did.”

“Who?” Demelza asked.

“Frank and Alice Longbottom,” Luna supplied. “Their minds were damaged and they didn’t know who Neville was and Ginny brought them back. She gave Neville his parents back.”

Demelza glanced at Ginny in surprise. “Like you did with Harry’s mum? Wow.”

“Double wow. It was huge and now he has his parents back and he can live happy and ... well I’m just glad he’s happy.” Ginny replied.

Luna nodded. “Me too. You know, once you get Neville going, he’s quite the wild man.”

Ginny laughed. “Wild man? Neville?”

Luna nodded. “Oh yeah. He’s got clever hands and a really great mouth and not to mention his sense of humour. We sort of caught Ron and Hermione falling out of a broom closet when looking for a good snogging place.”

Ginny laughed. “My brother and Miss Perfect in a broom closet? Please tell me you took pictures!”

Luna shrugged. “Sorry, my hands were busy tugging Neville inside of the closet.”

Demelza laughed. “Isn’t she wild?”

Ginny nodded. “Speaking of guys, anything with Colin yet?”

Demelza shook her head. “No, but ever since you talked to him he’s

been nicer when it comes to guys that I'm interested in. He caught me looking at Geoff Hooper and he offered to find out if he liked me. I don't know what he said but Geoff asked me to go to Hogsmeade with him."

Ginny smiled. "Dee that's great! Congratulations!"

"Well, I know I can't wait around. He's never going to see me as anything more than a friend and I have to understand that. I accept that."

Luna shrugged. "Well, you can always sneak alcohol into a party and get drunk and then snog him."

Demelza blushed. "Luna!"

"Just an idea."

Ginny laughed. "You two are too much sometimes!"

Luna nodded. "Well, we're going to be a whole lot more because you have some explaining to do."

"Yes," Demelza replied. "You told us about how intense it was when Harry found your tattoo but you didn't tell us how he found the tattoo?"

"Yeah and isn't that tattoo in a bit of a private place."

Ginny blushed. "So?"

Luna shook her head no. "Oh no, no, no, no, no, spill it, Gin."

Ginny grinned and sighed. "Alright, what do you want to know?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Neville sat in the Room of Requirement curled up with Luna a few days later. They had spent the last few days talking and snogging and spending as much time as possible together. Neville enjoyed

every minute of it. He closed his eyes as he held her close, she was sleeping in his arms and he couldn't say he blamed her as she had been attempting to read a seventy page chapter on goblin rebellions. He grinned at the thought and then even as his mind wandered he drifted off to sleep.

The dream started the same as always. He was happy and then the fear came as he watched the horror of what was done to his parents. He woke up, gasping for breath, startling Luna who was snuggled next to him.

"Neville?" She asked sleepily.

He simply shook his head and leaned forward to bury his face in his hands. He took deep calming breaths as he felt her hand run along his back in smooth strokes.

"I'm alright," he replied, his voice hoarse.

Luna nodded. "I never said otherwise."

"It's just ... a dream I have ... often."

"Want to talk about it?"

He shook his head. "No."

"Come here," Luna said softly, pulling him down so that his head was in her lap. "Now stretch out."

He did as he was told and sighed softly when she began to rub his temples gently. "I'm alright, really."

"I never said you weren't. Just lay here a minute."

He wasn't sure how long he stayed like that just listening to her even breathing as her soft hands rubbed the headache away that had formed at the memories. But it didn't take very long before he was pouring everything out.

“It’s the night my parents were driven into insanity.”

Her fingers froze for only a moment before she continued to rub gently.

“I don’t know how much of it actually happened. But I was just there, crawling around on the floor, standing up and walking a few steps. They were talking over me about what happened to Harry and how Voldemort had disappeared. My mum was upset over what happened. Lily Potter was a good friend of hers. Then there was this crash. Three Death Eaters broke through the window. I know who they were now; Bellatrix and Rudolphus Lestrange as well as Crouch Junior. They wanted to know where Voldemort was and they were looking for a cup or something. My parents didn’t know the answers so they started to torture them.” He replied quietly. “I just cried and cried because I didn’t understand what was happening. Then they took me into a separate room and left my mum alone with Rudolphus. Nothing happened really I just ... I was alone with these strangers and I was crying and crying. She hit me. She got fed up with my yelling and she backhanded me. I flew across the room and I hit my head. I don’t remember anything that happened after that.”

Luna moved her fingers to his hair, running her fingers through gently. “It’s alright to have nightmares, Neville. You were hardly more than a baby, what could you have done?”

“How much of it is true though? How much of it all really happened?”

“I don’t know. I guess you’re parents would be the ones to ask.” She leaned down to kiss him softly. “I know how you feel. I saw my mum die in front of me when I was nine. I have nightmares about it often.”

Neville sat up and looked at her. “I-I’m sorry, I didn’t know.”

She shrugged. “It’s alright, it happened a long time ago.”

“What happened?”

“She was experimenting with some new spell ideas and well one went horribly wrong. There was so much blood and ... I just

remember standing there, covered in blood and the potion that had exploded screaming at the top of my lungs until my father rushed in. I dream about it from time to time.” She took a deep breath. “But my mum’s death was an accident.”

Neville nodded. “Luna, I don’t know what I’d do without you lately.”

She smiled and pulled him close to kiss him. “Well, you would certainly have a lot of trouble snogging yourself.”

He laughed. “You’re different then I thought. I mean, you’re always so aloof and kind of dreamy-eyed around everyone else. How come you only open your true self to certain people?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. Habit I guess. You’re one of the privileged ones.”

He grinned. “Yeah, I guess so. Listen, thanks for listening.”

She smiled. “That’s what girlfriends are there for.”

“So you’re my girlfriend then?” Neville asked, a lopsided grin on his face.

Luna rolled her eyes. “Well, after the snogging sessions we’ve had, I better be!”

He laughed and leaned in to kiss her. “Good.”

She wrapped her arms around his neck and smiled. “Now it’s my job to make you think of better things.”

He smiled. “Good plan.” Then he captured her lips in his again.

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Ginny knocked on Lexy’s office door the next afternoon and grinned when she opened the door. “Hey Lexy.”

Lexy smiled in surprise. “Ginny! This is a surprise, please come in.”

Ginny closed the door behind her and looked around. The office suited her. It was decorated with pictures of family and friends and had some modern funky colours. She turned to look over at her and took a seat in one of the chairs. "I hope you don't mind me interrupting your break."

Lexy laughed. "Of course I don't mind. What can I do for you?"

Ginny smiled. "Well, first I'd just like to thank you for picking me to me godmother."

"Sirius wanted it and I don't think he could have picked a better choice. The two of you hit it off as fast friends and I can't explain it."

"Me neither. Actually, my friendship with Sirius is the thing that I want to talk to you about."

Lexy nodded. "Sure, what's going on?"

"Well you see, I got a tattoo in New York."

Lexy's mouth opened in surprise before she laughed. "Wow, that's impressive. What did you get?"

Ginny grinned. "A Hungarian horntail on my thigh."

Lexy nodded in understanding. "Ah, *'Harry, seen any dragons lately?'* I get it."

"I don't even know why I told him but I did, before Harry even knew about it. I told him where it was and what it was and ever since then he's been teasing Harry about it. Harry had no idea what he meant. He does now and well ... oh, I'm so mad at him!" Ginny exclaimed.

"I don't blame you. Got anything interesting planned for him?"

Ginny grinned wickedly. "Actually, I've got what I think is the world's perfect prank."

Lexy leaned back in her chair with a grin on her face. "Well, no one deserves to be pranked as badly as my husband."

"I'm glad you feel that way because I kind of need your help."

"Do you really think you can prank him? I mean, he is a Marauder."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "He may be a Marauder but my brothers are Fred and George."

Lexy laughed. "Good point. Alright, I'm in. What do I have to do?"

Ginny grinned and clapped her hands together. "Great! Okay, listen up; this is what we're going to do ..."

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## **Chapter 78: The Reason Why Sirius Shouldn't Anger Ginny Weasley**

**Author's Notes:** thanks to kate for helping me in my title crisis  
plz review!

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### **Chapter LXXVIII — The Reason Why Sirius Black Shouldn't Anger Ginny Weasley**

It was a week later and the school was sitting in the Great Hall eating breakfast. Ginny pushed her porridge around with her spoon. She couldn't drum up the energy to eat, not when she was much too focused on her plan for the evening. She had worked it all out with Lexy and she knew that it was going to really good. She grinned wickedly at the thought. Sirius was going down. It would be a slow and painful torture ... she was going to make sure of it.

She had received the letter the night before and she pulled it out of her pocket to read again, a huge grin on her face.

**Hey Gin!**

**We were ever so happy and surprised to get a letter from you twice in less than six weeks — you are turning into a regular Princess of Mayhem! Guess that shirt we got you really fit you to a tee! It makes us so proud; we were kind of worried that with those grades that you were going to follow into the git's footsteps. Anyway, we sent along the perfect thing to get you what you're looking for — we had to tweak it a bit to suit your needs but it should work. Write back — we want to know everything.**

**Love your two favourite pranksters,  
Gred and Forge**

Harry took a seat next to her just as she folded the letter up and placed it back into her pocket. He kissed her softly.

"Hey, who's the letter from?"

She grinned wickedly. "The twins. They're helping me in my prank on Sirius."

Harry nodded. "Uh-huh, you know I keep hearing about this but I haven't seen anything yet."

"It's all organized now. Just wait, it's going to brilliant!" She looked over at the head table and winked at Lexy.

Lexy saw the wink and grinned. The two of them had decided that as soon as Ginny had clarification from the twins, she would wink to inform her that the prank was starting. She grinned and slid her hand under the table, stroking it lightly over her husband's thighs.

Sirius glanced over at her in surprise and then grinned. "Want to skip breakfast, Lex?"

She shook her head and continued to run her fingers along his thigh as she looked at him. "No, maybe later."



He gave her a look that clearly stated later wasn't an option. "Baby, are you trying to kill me?"

Lexy shrugged and went back to eating her breakfast, knowing that he wouldn't do anything too drastic since they were sitting up at the head table. This day was going to be excellent and she couldn't wait to see the reaction he had to the prank. Her breath hitched slightly when she felt Sirius' hands slide up her skirt to stroke over her skin. She had forgotten about his magical fingers.

"Sirius," she murmured, her eyes meeting his.

He just grinned. "Two can play, Lex."

Lexy bit her bottom lip gently before she turned back to her breakfast. Ginny had better make sure this prank worked because she really wanted to see her husband get conned. She grinned to herself, oh yes; it was going to be a great day.

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As Lexy was thinking about Sirius, another owl landed in front of Lavender with a package. She slipped the parchment into her pocket and the package into her bag. No one noticed and she sighed. She had been getting these romantic letters and gifts since the week school had started up again. She had no idea who they were from and she knew that her boyfriend was getting upset by them. But who was sending them? She couldn't think of anyone in the school that was this sweet.

She slipped out of the Great Hall and ran up to her dorm to read it. She unscrolled the parchment and read it carefully.

**To the lovely Lavender,**

**I keep writing you these letters or these notes really to try to explain how I feel about you. I just cannot drum up the courage to do it in person. I'm terrified of your reaction beyond anything. For years I have tried to gain your attention yet you take no notice of me. I understand as someone of your great beauty**

would be distracted. You're so radiant that when I look into your eyes I feel like I'm drowning and I can't breathe. You have no idea how much you shine or how desirable you are.

I'm tired of writing these letters, of watching you open them and the delight that forms on your face. Or how your beautiful hazel eyes light up when you're laughing or when you're happy. You have a boyfriend and I know that but ... a friend of mine was right. If I don't tell you how I feel I'll never forgive myself. I've been in love with you since third year. I remember the moment clearly when I realized that it was more than friendship. I need to know if I stand a chance with you. Even if I don't, even if you don't feel the same, I just want you to know that you deserve to be worshipped and one lucky bloke is going to get that opportunity. I just hope that he does it right.

**Meet me on the next Hogsmeade trip. 11a.m. outside of the Shrieking Shack.**

### **Love your Secret Admirer**

Lavender clutched the letter to her heart. His words were so beautiful and the little things he noticed. She couldn't remember the last guy she had dated who knew the colour of her eyes. He wanted to meet her. The trip to Hogsmeade was in two weeks and she was going with Justin. But she could come up with an excuse to meet him and leave Justin. He was kind of boring her anyway, Justin was nothing like she had thought he would be. He was kind and sweet but he was a little self-centered and talked of nothing except himself. She would find a way to escape to meet her secret admirer. Seamus could probably help her come up with an excuse. This secret admirer had to be wonderful. He was so sweet and he knew just how to make her smile. She pulled the package out of her bag and sighed as she ripped it open. Then she gasped.

Inside the package was silver bracelet with lavender coloured stones that she had seen in London. She had been talking about nothing else since she returned to school. She had been fascinated by the stones and she had fallen in love with it. Everyone she knew had known that she was saving up for it. She admired the bracelet for a

moment and then pulled out a red rose that had fallen from the package and sighed. She had to meet him. She snapped the bracelet on her wrist and hurried down the stairs, almost running directly into Seamus who was coming down the boys' dormitory. He grabbed her arm to steady her.

"Whoa there."

She laughed and threw her arms around him. "Seamus, look!"

She held out her wrist and he managed a small smile. He had spent a good portion of his money on that bracelet. "Is this the bracelet you've been talking about for weeks?"

She nodded. "Yes! Isn't it beautiful?"

"Aye it is. I didn't know you had sent for it."

"I didn't. My secret admirer sent it to me."

Seamus nodded. "Were you surprised?"

"Yes, I mean, he obviously must care about me or why else would he spend so much on it? Who is he? I mean ... he has to know me, right? He wants me to meet him."

"Are you going to?"

She shrugged. "I want to. What do you think that I should do?"

He sighed. "I think that you should meet him. Even if he is the last person you could ever suspect, I think that you should meet him."

Lavender glanced at him quizzically. "Seamus, do you know who it is?"

Seamus jolted at the question. "Um, no, why would you think that?"

"You do, you know who it is! Tell me! I don't want to wait until Hogsmeade." Lavender begged, giving him her puppy dog eyes.

They almost always worked on Seamus.

Seamus gulped and then shook his head. "No, I'm not going to tell you, what if it's someone you could never love in any way other than friendship? Then what?" He demanded, angry at the entire situation and even more angry because the only thing he wanted was to yank her towards him and kiss her until she surrendered.

She sighed. "Wouldn't it be better then if I knew now?"

He shook his head. "No, this ... he's a friend of mine and no; I said I wouldn't tell. I've got to head to class. I'll see you, Lave."

She watched him go, her hand stroking the bracelet affectionately. Something huge was bothering him and it had been steadily getting worse since Christmas. She had waited and waited for him to bring it up to her but he hadn't and she felt a little hurt by that. Why was Seamus ignoring her? He always told her everything. Her thoughts were interrupted by the gong of the clock and she swore silently. She was going to be late for class, again.

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Sirius swore silently when his last class exited the room and his wife made her way in. He wasn't sure exactly what game she was playing but she seemed to be trying anything and everything to seduce him all day and then leaving him frustrated and restless. The only thing he had left to get through was dinner and then he was going to make love to her. She was grinning at him as she stepped into the classroom.

"Hey, how were your classes?"

Sirius took a few quick steps towards her and yanked her towards him, leaning down to capture her mouth. The kiss was long, hard, and deep and when he pulled away her eyes were glazed over in pleasure. "Just fine, love, how was yours?"

She sighed and placed a hand on his chest. "I think it might get better. Let's go eat a quick dinner."

He grinned wickedly. "I thought you'd never ask."

They hurried into the Great Hall and took their seats just as Ginny made her way up to the head table with Harry. "Hi."

Sirius grinned at her. "Hey Gorgeous, what's up?"

Ginny shrugged. "Nothing much I had a question for you on the assignment you gave today."

Sirius nodded. "Sure, what's up with it?"

Ginny began to explain her problem, using her hands in her speech and Harry noticed a couple drops of something fall out of her sleeve and into Sirius' goblet before she finished. "Well?"

"That makes sense. If you think it will be easier for you then by all means do it that way. The project is meant to help you better understand all the curses and jinxes in the chapter. Does that help?"

Ginny nodded. "Yes, thanks. Oh, and Lexy, thanks for helping me out before."

Lexy grinned, she had obviously completed phase two. "No problem. It's all done then?"

"Yeah, the assignment's complete. Thanks for your help."

Ginny grinned and tugged Harry away from the table and towards the Gryffindor table as Harry grabbed her arm. "Okay Gin, what did you drop in his goblet?"

Ginny grinned mischievously and turned to pat his cheek. "Nothing at all, Mr. Potter."

Harry laughed. "Just tell me this, how good is it?"

"The best. He won't know what hit him and best of all, Lexy is in on it." She explained.

Harry laughed. "Oh, boy. This should be interesting."

***Meanwhile at the Head table, Sirius was trying to hurry Lexy along.***

"Come on Lex, let's go upstairs."

Lexy smiled. "I'm not finished eating yet. Drink your pumpkin juice its good for you." She managed to suppress her grin when he downed his potion-filled drink quickly.

"Now can we go?"

"When I'm done." She replied, her hand sliding over his hip.

He closed his eyes. "I think you're trying to kill me." He watched her finish her dinner and then the two of them got up to leave. As soon as the door closed in their suite, Sirius scooped Lexy into his arms and pinned her back against the wall. "Okay, seduction's over."

She laughed. "I think it's only beginning."

He grinned broadly, his eyes falling down to her fingers as he watched her unbutton her blouse. He had one hand on her hip and his left leg was between her legs as he held her against the wall. His other hand gently ran over her stomach that now had a tiny bulge, making him smile at the thought that that was his baby in there before he moved up to unhook her bra. "I've wanted you all day, so badly that I could taste it."

She nodded and her body arched under his stroking hands as she reached up to pull his head down for a kiss. Her tongue met his and he groaned as his hands continued to glide over her. She could feel his reaction as his jeans rubbed against her stomach and she grinned in response, pulling back to look into his eyes before she slid her hand down to unbutton his jeans. Sirius' eyes were closed and he groaned.

"Gods, you feel good."

"Hmm, you taste pretty good yourself and feel wonderful," she murmured as she unbuttoned his black silk shirt and ran her hands over his chest.

Sirius opened his eyes to grin down at her and his eyes widened in horror. The hands that were running down his chest and beneath his waistband were not the small pale hands that he had come to love with the French manicure but large long-fingered hands that looked strangely familiar. His eyes darted to the face and instead of Lexy's soft green eyes and gorgeous blonde hair he found himself staring into the hook-nosed, greasy-haired face of Severus Snape. His whole body tensed and he jumped back in alarm.

"What the fuck? Is this a sick joke?"

Lexy glanced at him, hoping her face showed surprise rather than laughter. "Honey, what's wrong?"

Sirius shook his head as he stared at her. What was going on with him? Lexy was standing there, her hair disheveled, half-naked and looking incredible. "Nothing, nothing, sorry I ... nothing." He slipped his arms around her and buried his face in the crook of her neck, inhaling her scent. "Nothing. Merlin, you're beautiful."

Lexy smiled against him, sliding the shirt off his shoulders. "Glad you think so." She ran her hands along his chest again. "You're so built." She slid his jeans down his hips as she planted small kisses on his stomach.

His breath hitched and he buried his hands in her hair. He stepped out of his jeans and she stood up to take off her skirt. Sirius placed his hands over hers. "Allow me."

Once she was standing in all her glory he scooped her up and carried her into the bedroom. He was holding her over the bed when he leaned in to kiss her deeply. She moaned and when he pulled back, the gorgeous naked woman in his arms had vanished and instead he was holding a very naked Severus Snape. He yelped and let go, dropping him onto the bed before he practically bolted from the spot.

“Okay, seriously, what’s going on?”

Lexy caught herself before she fell off the bed as she looked into her husband’s eyes. They had turned glassy and horrified as he stood in front of the bedroom door in nothing but his boxers. From the look of him, more than just his eyes had changed.

“Sirius, what’s wrong?” Lexy asked, hoping that she sounded concerned and confused, her eyes twinkling in suppressed laughter.

Sirius closed his eyes and took a few deep calming breaths. When he opened his eyes, the image of naked Snape on the bed was gone to be replaced by naked sexy Lexy. “Nothing, nothing. I’m just ... I think I’m tired.”

Lexy smiled seductively. “I know just the thing to make sure you have a good night’s rest.” She crooked her finger seductively and Sirius felt his body jump back into action. He crawled back onto the bed and cupped her face.

“I love you. I’ve never loved anyone else.”

She nodded and moaned as he nibbled his way down her neck and then down her body. He was on top of her now, his hands moving over her skin as his lips moved back to hers. The kiss was soft and sweet, different from the heat they had started with. He looked into her eyes with a grin and then jumped off the bed when the green eyes were suddenly black.

“Okay no, no, just no.”

Lexy couldn’t take it anymore. She burst out laughing, rolling over to bury her face in the pillow.

“YOU!” Sirius bellowed, realizing instantly that he wasn’t going crazy. “You know! You know exactly what’s wrong with me!”

Lexy shook her head no as she giggled. Her laughing had progressed to silent laughter by now making Sirius’ eyes darken.



He hopped back onto the bed. "Lex! You tell me what kind of joke this is! Why the hell am I seeing Snape at my most intimate moments with you?"

She was roaring now, the pillow barely muffling the sound.

"Lexy! Damn it! Who would do this? Why did you do this? What have I done to piss you off? The only thing I've done lately to annoy anyone is ... GINNY!" He exclaimed. "She did this! Didn't she? Oh, I'm going to bloody kill her!"

Lexy managed to control her laughter by now and she grinned at him. "She's been planning it for weeks ... Sirius!" She clutched her stomach as if in pain from the laughing. "You basically told Harry about that tattoo!"

Sirius shook his head. "No, I was just teasing and I didn't think she'd ... oh, she thinks she's clever! Where the hell are my pants?" He found his jeans and he dragged them on, followed by his shirt. "I'm going to kill her."

He stormed out of the room, leaving Lexy naked and laughing on the bed. He walked down the hall to the portrait of the Fat Lady and once she let him in, he walked into the common room. It was fairly empty as most of the students were still at dinner, but to his relief, Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Harry, and Neville were sitting there. Ginny was curled up in Harry's lap, leaning comfortably against his shoulder. He walked over to her and they all looked up.

"Sirius?" Harry asked in surprise. "What are you doing here?"

Sirius shook his head. "Ginny, what the hell did you do to me?"

Ginny's mouth opened in surprise and her face took on a surprisingly innocent glow even as her eyes were laughing. "What do you mean? I haven't done anything to you."

Sirius glared at her. "You fix it! You fix it right now!"

Ginny grinned. "Fix what?"

He was biting his lip to keep from screaming at her. "Gorgeous, come on! This was a sick prank! A sick and horrible — you are evil!"

"I don't think I did anything."

Harry grinned now. "You look fine to me, Sirius, what did she do?"

Sirius blushed now; the first time Harry had ever seen him do so. "She made ... she made me ... Lex and I were ... we were on the verge of making love and every time we got really intimate ... well I ... I wouldn't see Lex anymore. I'd see ... something else."

Harry shrugged. "What's wrong with that?"

Neville nodded. "Yeah, I mean, no offence, Professor, but that doesn't sound too bad."

Sirius glared at them. "Not too bad! Not too bad! I almost had a bloody heart attack!"

Ginny giggled now. "Why Sirius? What are you seeing?"

His eyes darkened and he grinned at her as he shook his head. "Oh, I'm so getting you back for this."

Ron grinned. "Seriously, what are you seeing instead of Lexy that's so bad?"

"Snape!" Sirius exclaimed. "Naked Snape! It's enough to give a bloke nightmares for the rest of his days!"

Harry, Ron, and Neville all busted out laughing before they could stop themselves. Hermione was biting her lip as if she was trying not to laugh and Ginny was practically crying, her silent laughter was so hard.

"Oh, laugh away!" Sirius demanded. "Fix it, Ginny! Make it stop! You fix it right now!"

Ginny wiped tears of laughter from her eyes. "I can't. It lasts about four hours."

"FOUR HOURS?" Sirius shrieked.

Ginny nodded. "It just has to wear off."

Sirius glared at her. "You are so dead."

She grinned. "Payback's a bitch, Sirius. I told you I would hurt you."

"Yeah, well, I bloody well thought that you were going to bat bogey me!"

Ginny laughed. "I thought about it. But this was better."

"How did you do it?" He asked. "I mean, what did you do that makes me see this?"

Ginny grinned. "I wrote to Fred and George and told them what I was looking for. I specifically said I wanted something that would reverse the situation. So whatever you were doing with Lexy you would see yourself doing with Snape. I asked for Snape. Quite brilliant actually, I think. Then I filled Lexy in and she offered to help and well ... I thought it was a good idea."

"And disturbing! Snivelis! Errrrrrrrr — Ginny I'm so ... errrrrrrr!" He exclaimed before he turned around and stormed out of the common room.

As soon as the portrait hole slammed behind him, all five of them burst into laughter again.

Sirius returned to his suite to find Lexy sitting in the living room in her robe drinking tea.

"Well, what did Ginny say?"

"You were in on this."

Lexy laughed. "She asked for my help, why shouldn't I offer it?"

Sirius plopped down next to her and buried his face in her shoulder. "But you're supposed to be on my side!"

She grinned and ran her fingers through his hair. "I'm always on your side. But I happened to think that you went too far in this one. Ginny asked you to keep a secret, not to dangle it over Harry's head."

He sighed. "It's supposed to last for another three hours."

She laughed and kissed his cheek. "Go mark some tests. I'll make it up to you later."

Sirius perked up immediately. "How?"

Lexy smiled. "Oh, you just wait. I've got a new outfit I think you'll like." She climbed off the couch and turned to smile at him. "I'm going to go take a bath. Three hours Sirius, that prank needs to wear off."

He grinned. "I can wait, but Ginny's going to pay for this."

Lexy's eyebrow rose. "Oh, no, she's not. And if I find that you do anything to her or order anyone else to do something to her, I won't ... I will ... I won't make love with you until after the baby's born."

"But, but that's like seven months!"

Lexy shook her head. "Oh, no, honey, it's longer than that. You can't make love directly after having a baby. You need a little time to heal. You behave."

He pouted. "Torture."

She laughed. "Get used to it."

He watched her walk away and he sighed. She had him wrapped around her finger and the most surprising part. He kind of liked it.

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Ron walked hand in hand with Hermione through the halls as they did their prefect duties. They had pretty much walked in silence for the most part and now as they were checking the last areas of the castle, he spoke.

“Mione, do you think Harry’s changed?”

Hermione glanced at Ron in surprise. “What brought that on?”

Ron shrugged as he tugged her into an empty classroom and locked and silenced the door. “I don’t know. He just seems different somehow, lately. It’s probably just me.”

Hermione let Ron tug her down into his lap in one of the chairs. “Is this about us?”

“No, it has nothing to do with us. As friends, I guess it might have a bit to do with us, it’s just ... he seems different. I noticed it a while ago. People say I don’t notice things, but I do. Since Draco I guess.”

Hermione laughed. “Are you worried that Draco’s going to replace you in the best friend category?”

Ron glanced at her with a baffled expression. “No. Harry’s my best mate and I doubt anything could ever change that. I get that there’s a lot of things that Harry can’t and won’t share with me. Like You-Know-Who for example. He’s ... bonded with him, I guess, which is kind of why he and Gin understand each other so well. I think Draco has that too — kind of that they’ve been touched by evil sort of thing. I get that.”

She ran her fingers down his cheek. “Then what are you saying, sweetie?”

He shrugged. “I’m just being an idiot. Never mind.”

Hermione shook her head. “No, you’re not being an idiot. What do you mean, Ron?”

"I just kind of feel like he's drifting away from me."

"That's ridiculous. Harry is your best friend and nothing is going to change that. He's just going through a lot of things right now. Draco for one. He's now friends with him rather than enemies. He has his mother again. He's a godfather to a beautiful baby boy. Ginny just returned and she's stronger and more beautiful and more powerful than ever. He's got loads of girls after him because he's rich and famous. It's a lot for him to take."

Ron nodded. "I guess so. Sometimes I just feel like our friendship is changing and other times it feels exactly the same. Does that make sense?"

"Yes, it does. You guys are growing up, Ron, moving from boyhood to teens to adults. You're changing and so is Harry. *'Get not your friends by bare compliments, but by giving them sensible tokens of your love'*."

"Huh?" Ron asked, a baffled expression on his face.

Hermione laughed. "Socrates said it. He was a Greek philosopher who lived around 400 B.C.E. Harry knows that you love him and that you care for him. You're the brother that he's never had, you're his best mate. Who does he go to when he needs to vent? Who does he go to when he has girl troubles? Who does he go to when he needs to talk about Quidditch? Who does he ask for advice when it comes to leading the team? His best mate. Who does he stand up for at all opportunities? Who has he defended all through school when Slytherins made fun of your family? Those are sensible tokens of love, Ron, love he has for you. You've done the same for him. Like all friends you've had your minor disagreements, but you're still together. Do you know why?"

"No, why?"

"Because you would both be miserable without the other."

Ron shrugged. "I suppose so, yeah."

She smiled. "Ron, when you thought that he had entered the tournament two years ago both of you were so miserable. Harry turned to Ginny and me and so did you. We were walls between you and getting so frustrated when you two refused to talk. Harry may go to Ginny now for a lot of things that he used to go to you for, but do you not do the same thing with me?"

"Maybe."

"It's part of growing up, that drifting apart and coming together. You're not losing Harry."

He grinned. "You understand me so well it kind of scares me."

She smacked his arm playfully. "Again, this brings up the thing of you talking to me about this instead of him?"

He sighed. "I see your point and I guess that Socrates guy knew what he was talking about."

Hermione laughed. "Yes, he did. You and Harry need each other and you know what, through all of this I've grown closer to him. I love Harry just as much as you do, Ron, and he made me see that he's the brother I've never had and that he'll be there for me no matter what. We ... learned more about each other."

Ron glanced at her quizzically. "What do you mean?"

"When Harry came to visit me in the summer, after you all seemed to believe that whoever questioned me would be hexed into oblivion?"

Ron winced. "Right, forgot about that. I forget exactly what it was about but Harry thought that you were hiding stuff about your family."

She nodded. "I was. They love me in their own way but I'm a convenience to them. My parents are nothing like yours, Ron. They lead very busy lives and don't have time for me half the time. Basically, they've ignored me most of my life. Harry noticed and even when I denied it, my parents showed up and proved him right."

“Do they hurt you?” Ron asked, his arms tightening around her waist and his blue eyes hardening.

She smiled. “No, of course not. Emotionally it hurts me, it hurts my heart, but at the same time I know that there’s nothing that I can do to stop it. It’s the way they are. They love me and are proud of me and they love to show me off to their friends in that, look how smart our daughter is way. I study in the summer and I learn as much as possible so I can sit with their friends and at their dinner parties and share in these intellectual conversations. They just don’t understand me and that hurts, but at the same time I’m okay with it. Do you know why?”

Ron shook his head. “No. why?”

“Because Harry is the brother that I never had and between your two families I have more people that love me and care about me then I could ever have imagined. That’s good enough for me.”

Ron smiled. “I’m glad. I’m glad that you and Harry got closer too. I guess you and I were always a bit closer to each other then you and Harry were.”

She laughed. “Probably because we couldn’t seem to stop our tempers.”

He grinned and leaned in to nibble on her bottom lip. “Want to know a secret, Mione?”

“What?” She breathed, his lips brushing against hers as he spoke.

“You’re incredible when you’re angry.”

She backed up in surprise. “What?”

Ron grinned. “You’re eyes get this dark intense brown and your bottom lip quivers. It makes me want the hell out of you. I used to pick fights with you just so I could see you angry.”



She blushed. "You're lying."

He shook his head. "Not in the least. You are so bloody beautiful when you're pissed at me. It drives me insane."

Hermione wrapped her arms around his neck and leaned in to kiss him softly. "You know, Ron, sometimes you say just the right thing and it surprises me."

He shrugged. "I can be sweet and sensitive."

She laughed. "Yet you're usually dense and annoying."

He grinned. "And what does that get you?"

"Annoyed and angry."

He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "See, you're beginning to understand."

She laughed. "I love you."

He slipped his hands into the bushy thick head of hair. "Yeah, well I love you too."

"Guess were stuck then."

He grinned. "Guess we are." He pulled her closer and brought his lips to hers, ending the conversation.

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Finally it was Valentine's Day and the day of the first Hogsmeade trip of the New Year. Harry had big plans for Ginny today and he couldn't wait to get her to Hogsmeade so that he could start romancing her like she deserved. He glanced over at Seamus who looked incredibly nervous. He was going to be meeting Lavender today and telling her that he was the secret admirer. Lavender looked just as nervous as he did.

However hopes of the romantic day dashed when Harry opened the *Daily Prophet* that morning and read the front page:

## **DEATH EATERS ATTACK HOMES NEAR HOGSMEADE**

Written by: *Adam Paine*

*Six homes were attacked last night by unknown witches and wizards in cloaks and masks believed to be Death Eaters. The homes were only six blocks away from the town of Hogsmeade. Two of the homes turned out to be abandoned and were simply looted and destroyed but the other four had families inside.*

*It doesn't seem to have been for any particular reason as no one was killed but as one of the witnesses describes, it seemed to have been fun.*

*"It was like nothing I had ever seen before! I didn't think they wanted anything. They broke into the homes and pulled families outside or cursed them out but they were laughing and burning things as if it was just a good night out on the town." A Miss — Who Wishes Not to be Named — replies.*

*Two of the women were brutally raped and are in St. Mungo's for treatment. Three men are in intensive care for extreme torture and one four-year-old-boy has a broken leg. All of the other survivors are fine and seem to be surprised to find themselves alive. The question then becomes — why are they alive? What were the Death Eaters hoping to prove?*

*Until we find the answers we urge all members of the community to please add to their home security. Minister Scrimgeour promises that the people responsible will be brought to justice.*

Harry passed the newspaper over to Ron. "What do you make of it?"

Ron groaned. "There's no way Dumbledore's going to let us go to Hogsmeade now!"

Before Harry could comment, Dumbledore stood up and the hall went silent.

"I have an announcement to make. There was an attack near Hogsmeade by some Death Eaters. Due to these circumstances I'm afraid that the trip to Hogsmeade will have to be cancelled today." There were groans and cat calls at this. "However, it will be rescheduled for the end of March with a Valentine's Day theme and extra security. As a treat and for the inconvenience, all classes will be cancelled on Monday." Cheering erupted and Dumbledore smiled. "Thank you."

Ron grinned. "Excellent! Odd that he's canceling classes though. What does that have to do with anything?"

Harry shrugged. "No idea. I guess we'll find out later though. Maybe it has something to do with the Order?"

"No idea." Ron murmured as Hermione took a seat next to him.

"Can you believe him? Cancelling classes for an entire day? What is wrong with the world?"

Ron rolled his eyes at Harry. "Mione, really, lighten up."

Harry snorted into his pumpkin juice as Hermione's eyes fired up and he turned to Seamus who was sitting next to him. The last thing he wanted was to listen to them bickering. "Well, relief or disappointment?"

Seamus buried his face in his hands. "I don't know. I just don't bloody know."

Harry nodded as he glanced over at Lavender. "She looks pretty upset. She's got tears in her eyes. I heard she was really looking forward to it."

Seamus shrugged. "What do you want me to do about it?"

Harry used a spell he learnt from Sirius so that other people couldn't hear their conversation. "Maybe you should meet her at school, somewhere private. It's almost two months until the next trip. Do you

really want to wait that long?”

He sighed. “I don’t know what I want. I’ll write her a letter again and ... we’ll see.”

Harry grinned. “Good luck, mate.” His grin widened when Ginny plopped herself down onto his lap. “Hey, I was wondering when you would crawl out of bed.”

She smiled and kissed him softly. “What’s this I hear about our trip being cancelled?”

He nodded. “Yeah, there was an attack near the village. No one died but a few people were seriously injured. Dumbledore doesn’t want us going until he can make sure the village is very secure.” He brought her hands to his lips. “I’ve still got plans for you though.”

She grinned. “What kind of plans?”

He smiled. “Well, I was thinking that since we can’t go into the village, why don’t we go into my trunk? We’ll have a romantic dinner and maybe I’ll let you con me into dancing. We’ll just sit and snog and you can let me pamper you all day. What do you say?” He snapped his fingers and a red lily appeared there.

Ginny grinned at him as she accepted the flower. “I think it sounds wonderful.” She leaned in to kiss him. “Did you get me a present?”

Harry laughed. “I don’t know, I might have. Did you get me a present?”

She grinned. “I might have.”

He grinned at her. “Well come on then, let’s go start enjoying our day.”

Ginny smiled. “It sounds like a pretty good idea to me.” She hopped off his lap and took his hand in hers as she led him out of the Great Hall, ignoring the jealous stares she was getting from most of the girls. Once they were in the entrance hall, she pushed him back against

the wall and kissed him deeply.

“Mmm,” he murmured when she pulled back. “Come back here.”

She laughed. “In a minute.” She let him drag her closer and she grinned.

“Hey Gin?”

“Yes?”

He ran a fingertip down her cheek and neck and down to the very tip of her v-neck shirt making her shiver in pleasure. “Do you think that I could see that tattoo again?”

She blushed and then she grinned. “Maybe, if my present’s good enough.”

He laughed and kissed her. “Sounds good to me. Race you to the common room?”

She grinned. “Deal.”

Then she took off running before he could respond. He watched her go for a moment and then he grinned. Yeah, this day was still going to be pretty damn good.

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## Chapter 79: Happy Valentine's Day

**Author's Notes:** wow so this is the longest chapter i have ever written! i hope u guys enjoy it!!  
plz review:D

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## Chapter Seventy-Nine — Happy Valentine’s Day

As soon as Harry got her into his trunk, he pinned her back against the wall to kiss her deeply.

“So, I think I won.”

She shook her head. “No way, I totally won. You cheated by pulling me aside to kiss me.”

He grinned and slid his hands around her waist. “No, I think that was just an obstacle. You lost.”

Ginny rolled her eyes. “Prat. Now where’s my present?”

He grinned and turned his head to nibble on her ear. “Where’s your tattoo?”

“Nuh-uh, mister, presents first.”

“You know, I never realized that you were so greedy.”

She laughed. “Greedy, I suppose I might be. But you really give the best presents.”

He smiled and kissed her again. “I love to give you presents because you never seem to expect them. Does that make sense?”

Ginny shook her head no as she glanced at him quizzically. “No, I always expect them.”

He grinned. “That’s not what I meant. I mean, I know that you’re with me for me and not for my fortune or my fame.”

Ginny smiled now, her eyes lighting up in understanding. “Very right about that, Mr. Potter, I’m with you strictly for your body.”

He snorted. “Right. I love you, Ginny. Sometimes I think I don’t tell you that enough.”

“Oh Harry!” Ginny murmured, kissing him softly. “Of course you tell me and most of the time you don’t even have to say it. I can see it in

your eyes. You're eyes get so dark and intense and there's just this look you get in them, it's hard to explain but when you look at me with that look I know that you love me more than anything else in the entire world. I sometimes wonder why."

"Because you're so bloody amazing."

She sighed. "I'm glad you feel that way. But there are so many girls that are way more beautiful than me. Like Romilda Vane for example. She's a horrible person yes, but she's gorgeous and you just know that when she gets older she's going to be super model material."

Harry grinned. "I haven't noticed. She scares me and I avoid her."

Ginny laughed. "Okay, I'm being dumb. Ignore me." Then her voice grew serious. "I love you so much it scares me sometimes."

He pulled her closer to him so that she could snuggle into his chest. "I think that that means we're doing it right then."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I don't think love is supposed to be perfect and if it is then it's not right. I mean look at Sirius and Lexy, you remember when he told us he was getting married. He was terrified out of his mind and thought that he was going crazy. Remus just pushed and pushed at Tonks because he was afraid of what he felt. In a way I guess my mum was afraid of Da and they ended up together too." Harry explained. "I'm scared of what I feel for you sometimes and I can't imagine what it would be like if you weren't here, weren't in my life. I think I would die a little inside."

"That was the most beautiful thing you could have said, Harry. I think you're right, love's not supposed to be perfect. No one gets along all the time. We argue, it's rare I admit, but we do and we make up. Ron and Hermione are always arguing and well look at my parents. They are just ... they're amazing and I've always looked to them and known that I wanted that some day."

He grinned. "Me too." He tilted her face towards him and kissed her

softly. "Want your present now?"

She laughed. "Yes."

He grinned and pulled away so that he could find it in his robes. He pulled out a tiny box and quickly enlarged it before he handed it to her. "Happy Valentine's Day."

Ginny stared at the box for a moment, it was long and rectangular. "Is this embarrassingly expensive?"

He shrugged. "I thought you were greedy."

She blushed and untied the ribbon before she opened the lid. Inside of the box was a silver bracelet. It was corded and twisted and in every other small twist there was a brightly coloured stone.

"I asked the jeweler what each were. This one is amber, then citrine, quartz, an opal, ruby, tourmaline, and an emerald. I thought that it was pretty."

Ginny glanced at him and sighed. "It's so beautiful. Harry, I didn't expect ... I thought maybe I was going to get flowers or another charm for that other beautiful bracelet you bought me."

He grinned. "I liked this better. You know, for someone who wanted her present so badly you're kind of speechless."

"You really shouldn't spend so much money on me."

He rolled his eyes. "Why? Because I'm swimming in galleons. Gin, are you alright?"

She shrugged. "It's just ... I don't care what other people think but sometimes I hear rumours that ... well I am only dating you for your money and it makes me angry."

He grinned and took the bracelet from her before he slipped it on her wrist. "Uh-huh, well you've already admitted that you only want me for my body."



She laughed. "I'm being stupid. I love it. It's gorgeous."

"Not as beautiful as you." He murmured, pulling her close for another deep kiss. "So, can I see your tattoo now?"

She blushed. "You're hopeless."

"Nuh-uh, just determined."

"Don't you want your present?"

He grinned. "Maybe. Maybe I was just hoping that seeing the tattoo could be my present."

Ginny laughed and pulled out a box from her purse. "Happy Valentine's Day, Harry."

He led her over to the kitchen table and they took their seats before he opened the box. Inside was a beautiful silver watch with a gold snitch cover over the face. He opened it up and grinned. Under the lid of the snitch was the time, a broomstick was the big hand and a beater bat was the little hand. The numbers were instead Quidditch balls.

"Gin, this is brilliant! Where did you find this?"

She grinned. "I was talking to Charlie and he has this friend that designs Quidditch things and I explained what I was looking for and he came up with this. It's the only one of its kind. I thought that you would like it."

Harry tied the silver looped band over his wrist and then grinned. "This is great! My old watch is a bit beat up, I suppose."

Ginny nodded. "A little yes." She laughed when he scooped her up out of her chair and into a big comfy chair in the corner so that she was on his lap. "Harry!"

"Ginny!" He whined, his hands sliding through the buttons on her shirt.

Her eyes widened when he flung the shirt over her head. "My, my, Mr. Potter, you are bold."

He grinned and slid his hands up to cup her through the lace. "I want to see that tattoo."

She laughed. "You're looking in the wrong place."

He tilted his head sideways to grin at her. "I think I'll get there eventually."

She blushed a deep shade of red, her hands not quite steady when they fisted at his chest. "Harry—"

He shook his head. "I just want to taste you. I want to touch you."

She nodded. "It seems like —"

"It's not, Gin; I know we're not ready yet, though sometimes I wonder why the hell we're not. We've gotten close enough."

She slid her hands under his shirt. "I love you."

He grinned. "I love you too." Then he brought his lips down and crushed them to hers in a kiss filled with so much passion that her body practically exploded from the sensations. His hand slid under her skirt and his thumb and forefinger gently ran over the shape of the dragon. "Found it."

She grinned. "You're hopeless." She quivered under his touch and when his lips began to move down her neck she knew that she may not be ready for that final step just yet but she knew that it was coming. It was coming very soon.

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"Can I open my eyes yet?" Hermione asked, as she was dragged along the hall by Ron. He had told her that he had some kind of surprise for her and had then blindfolded her and was leading her

along somewhere.

“No, not yet. We’re almost there.”

Hermione simply sighed as she tried to figure out where they were. But they had been walking forever and she’d been through so many halls and corners and up so many stairs that she had no idea. She heard him mutter a password and then the sound of something opening before he pulled her inside.

“Okay, now you can look.” He carefully untied the blindfold and she blinked to try to get a look at her surroundings.

The room was rather small and had a chesterfield in it but it was decorated in red rose petals. There was also a huge bouquet of red roses on a table in the room.

“Happy Valentine’s Day, Mione.”

She grinned. “Ron! This is so sweet, where are we?”

He smiled. “Some old guest room that Harry found when exploring the map. There’s about eighteen in the castle. There’s a bedroom through there and the washroom and small kitchen are through there. I thought it was good spot to be alone.” He walked over to where the bouquet was and he picked up a single red rose and he handed it to her.

“I love it. It’s sweet.”

Ron smiled at her and then he wrapped his arms around her waist. “I have a gift for you too.” His ears were red now and Hermione smiled, standing on her toes to kiss him softly.

“Oh yeah?”

He nodded and led her over to the chesterfield. They took a seat and Ron reached down next to their seats and pulled out a small box. He handed it to her and then he watched anxiously as she began to untie the ribbons.

Hermione looked down into the box curiously and then she gasped in surprise. Inside was a beautiful pair of sapphire earrings in sterling silver. They were diamond shaped and gorgeous. "Ron," she breathed.

"I know that they're really expensive but I've been selling a lot of the twins' products here at school and I get fifty percent since I've been selling them. I saw them in the store at Hogsmeade last year and I wanted to buy them for you. So I've been saving up. Do you like them?"

Hermione could only stare at them. "I never expected ... oh, Ron they're beautiful!" She unhooked them from the sponge and carefully placed them in her ears.

"They look even more beautiful on you."

She smiled and put the box on the table, reaching over to tug Ron towards her. Her lips met his softly and she smiled at him. "I love them. Thank you."

He grinned and pulled her close to kiss her again. He slid his hands into the complicated twist she had done to her hair and he pulled out the pins so that her bushy curls fell into his hands.

"Ron," she murmured. "Do you have any idea how long it took me to do that this morning?"

He shrugged. "I like it like this." He kissed her again and smiled. "I knew those earrings would look perfect on you."

She smiled. "Thank you. I have something for you. It seems like nothing now though."

"I'm sure I'll love it, Mione."

She laughed. "I know you'll love it, it's just ... it doesn't seem like enough now after your present."

Ron grinned. "I'm sure it's perfect."

Hermione smiled and reached into her bag to pull out his gift. The box was a lot larger than hers had been. "Happy Valentine's Day, Ron."

Ron took the box from her with a grin on his face. He opened it up and pulled out a bright orange book. He glanced at it quizzically for a moment and then he opened it up. It said across the top: *Chudley Cannons and The Most Amazing Plays*.

"You see, each page has a little video of something great the team did at one time. Famous moves and the players and things. I thought that you ... well, I know you're pretty much the world's biggest Cannons fan."

Ron grinned. "This is brilliant, Hermione!"

She smiled. "Oh, I'm so glad you like it. I was worried there for a moment."

He laughed. "No, I love it. Blimey, look at that, this is how they won the championship back in 1892! If only they had players now like they did back then. And look at this — the Wronski Feint! I didn't know anyone from the Cannons had used that!"

Hermione rolled her eyes and wondered why she had bought him that book again. "Well, that should keep you occupied for a while then."

Ron seemed to recognize the anger in her tone because he tossed the book behind him instantly and pulled her into lap. "Maybe later, I have other plans today."

She blushed and slid her hands over the back of his neck. "What kind of plans?"

He brushed her hair out of her eyes and leaned down to kiss her softly. "Why don't I show you?"

She nodded as he lay her down on the chesterfield. He leaned down to kiss her, nibbling on her lips until she whimpered. He slid his hands

down to slide up her blouse, his calloused fingers running over her skin. She moaned and he used his lips to travel down her neck.

“I love you,” he whispered before he kissed her just under her ear.

“Ron, I love you too.” Her hands were tugging at his shirt now and she pulled it over his head and tossed it over the back of the couch. She ran her hands over his chest, admiring the smooth skin with a few freckles here and there.

He grinned down at her and unbuttoned her blouse, pulling it open and taking in the simple white lace bra. His eyes met hers before his mouth moved down to plant tiny kisses along the edge of the lace. Her body arched towards his mouth and he used that moment to reach back and unhook her bra. He continued his lazy journey over her skin with his mouth and she groaned.

“Ron, make love to me.”

His eyes met hers, showing surprise in them. “What?”

Hermione’s hands fisted in his hair. “I want to make love with you.”

“Are we ready for something like that?”

She blushed now, looking a little unsure. “Ron, I’ve dreamt of this moment since I was eleven. I’ve waited for you to notice me as something other than a friend since I was thirteen. I’ve been in love with you almost my entire life. I want you.”

He grinned and leaned down to run his tongue over her exposed skin. “I want you too. I just wanted to hear you say it.”

She laughed and tugged him closer. “I want you, Ron.”

Ron captured her lips in his and deepened the kiss, his hands sliding to her skirt. “Good.”

She gasped when he practically ripped the skirt off of her, surprised at the wave of passion she felt. Then when his hands and lips began

to make their way down her body she knew. This was the moment she had been waiting for. She reached for the snap of his jeans and grinned. She didn't want anyone else but him. He wiggled out of his jeans and continued to kiss her, soft and hard, long and lazy, fast and hot. But she knew that she was making the right decision when just before they joined he whispered gently in her ear.

"I love you, my Mione."

And at last, she was home.

\*\*\*\*\*

Seamus grinned when Lavender sat down next to him on the couch in the common room. The room was pretty empty since it was Valentine's Day and other than some first and second years mostly everyone else was off with their sweethearts. He smiled at the love of his life when she sat down.

"Hey, what are you doing here? Isn't Justin doing something special for you today?"

Lavender shrugged. "I don't know. He wished me happy Valentine's Day this morning and kissed me and then said he had some work to do and that he would talk to me later. Do you think he might actually have something planned and just wants to surprise me?" She asked, her voice hopeful.

Seamus slipped his arm around her. "I don't know. I don't know Finch-Fletchley too well, except that he's kind of dull."

She sighed. "He's so dull. I mean, Seamus he's sweet and kind and smart but he ... all he ever talks about is himself. He doesn't even listen to me when I talk. I don't know if these feelings are new or if it's just because I'm so angry about Hogsmeade being cancelled."

"You were supposed to meet your secret admirer right?"

She nodded. "I was so pumped. I wanted to look amazing."

“Lave, you always look amazing.”

She grinned and her head fell onto his shoulder. “Thanks. This is the worst Valentine’s Day ever.”

He smiled and ran his hand over her shoulder. “I’m sure Justin has something planned for you. He can’t be a total jerk.”

“If he doesn’t, are you going to beat him up?”

Seamus laughed. “If you want me too, I suppose I could. I don’t think Finch-Fletchley would put up much of a fight.”

She grinned. “I was being sarcastic, don’t you dare beat him up!”

He grinned. “I won’t touch him.”

“Hey Lavender!” A first year called out. “There’s some guy named Justin outside of the portrait hole for you.”

Lavender grinned. “He remembered!”

Seamus managed a small smile as he watched her jump up and do a quick fix on her hair before she hurried out of the room. He sighed as he watched her go. Harry had definitely been right about one thing. He couldn’t wait the two months and by the sound of it, neither could she. He went upstairs to his dorm and stretched out on his bed before he began the last letter he planned to write to her. He had just finished when Dean sauntered in.

“Seamus, mate, what are you doing in here moping?”

Seamus grinned. “Why do you think I’m moping?”

Dean shrugged and took a seat on the bed. “Mate, you could be having a good time. Padma wants you bad. I’m sure you could at least get a good shag in. She never got over you.”

He rolled his eyes. “Dean, look mate, I know you mean well, but you’ve never been in love. I don’t want to shag Padma. I did last year.



We dated and we had a good time but that's over. I love Lavender."

Dean sighed. "I know you do, mate, but until you come clean she's not going to know. What does that tell you?"

"To come clean?"

"Well, yeah, or move on. The secret admirer thing has been working has it not? But with Hogsmeade cancelled you've got to take the next step."

"I know," Seamus murmured. "Harry said the same thing. I'm going to. I'm going to have her meet me somewhere soon."

Dean grinned. "Good."

"So what are you doing up here anyway on Valentine's Day?"

Dean grinned. "Parvati mentioned that she wanted to change. I told her I'd meet her in the Astronomy Tower in an hour. I think I'm going to get lucky."

Seamus snorted. "No offence Dean, but uh, you and Parvati have been shagging like rabbits since the start of the year."

"Doesn't mean I can't look forward to shagging her again does it?" He asked. "Well, I'm going to go take a quick shower but good luck."

"Thanks."

He watched his friend head into the bathroom and he turned back to the letter he just wrote. He read it over carefully and then nodded. It was the last letter he was writing and this was the chance. When she met him he would find out just where he stood.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lexy was sitting in her office marking papers thinking very angry thoughts. It was Valentine's Day, supposed to be the most romantic day of the year but here she was, on her first Valentine's Day as a

married woman sitting alone. She wanted to kill Albus Dumbledore. Sirius had woken up that morning, promising to make it a wonderful day but then news of Hogsmeade spread. Dumbledore wanted certain staff members, who were members of the Order, to discuss the security features for the next trip. They were also going out near the attacks to look for any type of evidence that may have been left behind.

Sirius had been gone for hours and she was not pleased. Dumbledore told her she couldn't go in her condition because she had to stay home and protect the baby. She was as strong as a horse! But when Sirius had turned those puppy dog eyes on her she had relented. Now she was sitting here in her office marking essays and wishing desperately that she was anywhere else. It was almost dinner time and so far the only thing she had gotten out of her Valentine's Day was long deep kisses and a single red rose. She smiled at the memory but then returned to her scowling.

Lips fell onto her neck and arms encircled her waist and she smelt him before she saw him. That familiar scent of his cologne that made her blood run hot. "Mmm, miss me?" He asked as he kissed her earlobe.

"You better leave; my husband's a very jealous man."

"Mmm, I'll make it quick then. Wouldn't want to get caught." He spun her chair around and knelt in front of her. "I'm sorry, baby."

She leaned forward and took his face in her hands to kiss him softly. "I know. I'm angry at Dumbledore, not you."

Sirius grinned. "Good. Because I've got big plans for you." He scooped her up into his arms and headed into their bedroom. He dropped her down onto the bed and he snapped his fingers and something gold fell from them.

Lexy caught it in her hands. "What's this?"

"You're present. I never got around to wrapping it."

She opened the palm of her hand and stared down into it. There was a thin gold chain there with a tiny heart-shaped tag. On the tag it read: *L — Happy times together we've been spending. I wish that every kiss was never ending, wouldn't it be nice? — S.* She laughed. She couldn't help it.

Sirius grinned. "What don't you like it? I figured it was kind of like a tradition we've got to keep the classic going, honey."

Lexy grinned. "You are without a doubt the most ridiculous man." She wrapped her arms around and snuggled close. "I love you."

He wrapped his arms around her and let her cuddle. "I love you too. Does that mean you like it?"

She nodded and moved back to put it on. Sirius tied the clasp for her. "It's sweet. Thank you."

He leaned forward to kiss her softly. "You're welcome." He slid his hands down to the bottom of her shirt. "Now I think it's time for my present. Where's Padfoot?"

Lexy laughed. "Outside with Hagrid and Fang as usual. Why?"

He grinned. "Because innocent eyes shouldn't be seeing what I've got in store for you." Then he leaned down to silence her with a kiss.

\*\*\*\*\*

Remus rolled over in bed that morning when he heard the shower start. He had no desire to leave it. He was warm and cozy, still quite satisfied from the mind-blowing sex his gorgeous wife had woken him up with that morning. He smiled into the pillow and sighed when he heard Daniel waking up. He climbed out and stretched, pulling on a pair of faded gray sweatpants before he headed into their son's bedroom.

He was lying on his stomach, his arms flailing as he cried. Remus reached down and scooped him up into his arms, snuggling him into his shoulder. "Hey there, no need to cry. Daddy's got you."

Daniel stared at up him with big blue eyes, his hand reaching out to grasp Remus' finger as if in reassurance.

Remus planted a kiss on his son's head. He was now just a little over seven weeks old and he still couldn't believe that he was a father. He carefully placed Daniel on the change table before he changed his poopy nappy. He was kind of thankful that he had so much experience from changing Harry's nappies that he didn't have to worry about it. Daniel didn't move, he just shoved his thumb in his mouth and watched Remus carefully.

Once he was changed, Remus carried his son back into the bedroom, crawling back into bed. He lied on his back and held Daniel on his stomach, leaning down every once in a while to kiss his cheek. Within five minutes, both father and son were fast asleep.

Tonks came out of the bedroom ten minutes later. Her hair was bubblegum pink today, but the spikes were messy and wet as she hadn't gotten around to doing it yet. She was wrapped in Remus' dark blue ratty fuzzy robe and she was debating what else she wanted to do since it was Valentine's Day. Her eyes softened when she walked into the bedroom and saw them sleeping. She carefully crawled onto the bed and snuggled close, turning so that she could kiss Remus. Then she slipped Daniel out of his arms and slipped her robe open so that he would have access to his breakfast.

Daniel woke at the movement and made a tiny noise that caused Remus to wake up. Tonks silenced him by bringing him to her breast where he suckled happily.

"You two looked cozy." Tonks replied.

Remus grinned. "Well, he woke up."

She laughed and crooked her finger at him so that he came close enough for her to kiss him. "You're so cute, you know that?"

He looked slightly bewildered by this. "Okay."

“Happy Valentine’s Day, Remus.” Tonks murmured, pulling him close for another kiss.

“Yeah, same to you. I’ve got a present for you.”

“Oh yeah?” She asked.

He nodded and crawled off the bed before going into the closet and taking something out of his coat. “Happy Valentine’s Day, Nymphadora.” He opened the lid for her, since her hands were full of their son and she gasped.

It was an oval gold locket with a red stone in the centre. He opened it for her and on one side was a picture of the two of them kissing on their wedding day and the other side was a picture of Daniel.

“Remus, it’s beautiful!”

He smiled. “The red stone on the front is a symbol for Daniel’s birthstone.” He reached over to put it on for her. “That way you can remember both of your two favourite men.”

She laughed and tugged him close for another kiss. “You’ll have to get up to get your gift. But it’s in the top drawer of my dresser.”

Remus smiled and found the box quickly; he shook it lightly and heard a rattling. “Is it handcuffs?”

“Remus!” Tonks exclaimed, blushing.

He grinned. “Well, I thought it was clever.” He sat down on the bed and pulled it open. Inside was three small glass vials filled with an amber coloured liquid. “What’s this?”

“James found it actually. It’s an experiment that they’ve been working on at the ministry. James stole some and tested it. He did all sorts of tests. He swears on his life that it works. He told me to give it to you.”

Remus stared at the vials again. “What are they, Tonks?”

“It’s a potion that’s supposed to stop you from changing completely into a werewolf.”

“How?” He asked, his voice hard and his eyes swirling in emotions he couldn’t explain.

“When you change, you ... you will still keep your state of mind. Meaning, the wolf won’t completely take over. You’ll change physically into a werewolf but your mind will be Remus.” Tonks explained.

Remus stared at the potion. “He’s sure it works?”

Tonks nodded. “It’s been tested on quite a few different people and it’s all been the same result. It will make you safe.”

“The Wolfsbane makes me tired and weak but I’m still the wolf. This will let me be me?”

“Yes.”

He sat the vials on the nightstand before he crushed his mouth to hers in a long kiss. “I thought after having you and then Daniel, there was nothing you could have given me that would make me happier. You continue to surprise me.”

She smiled. “I love you. I want to protect you.”

He nodded. “I know you do. I love you too.” He kissed her again and then planted a kiss on Daniel’s cheek. “So love, how long until this little guy goes back to sleep?”

Tonks laughed. “Give him half an hour.”

Remus slid his hand under the robe and over her thighs, a wicked grin on his face. “Okay. But not a minute more.”

\*\*\*\*\*

Draco sat in the Slytherin common room flipping through the pages of

his journal. He wanted to write but at the same time he couldn't think of what to write or how to write. He was stuck. His eyes drifted across the room to where Delilah was curled up in a black leather chair, a book in her hands. She was entirely focused on what she was reading and didn't even notice that he was staring at her. He sighed, Valentine's Day sucked.

He decided it could get worse when he noticed Pansy making her way towards him. She was beautiful and always had been. She had dark black hair that she wore chin length which flattered her face and her eyes were a dark blue. But no matter how beautiful she was, she drove him bloody insane. He rolled his eyes at her as she stepped in front of him.

"You know, Draco, I think it's awfully rude of you to not get me anything for Valentine's Day." She demanded, her hands on her hips. Most of the guys in the common room were now staring at her in desire but she ignored them.

Draco shrugged. "Well, you're not my girlfriend so why should I get you anything?"

"I'm your fiancée! That means you have to get me something!"

"Not by choice and I think that changes quite a bit!"

"Ugh," Pansy replied angrily. "You have to marry me! And when you do you're going to start treating me with respect! I put up with a lot of crap from you, Draco! You watch other girls, hit on other girls, what about me?"

Draco glared at her now, not even caring that their conversation was now being known to the entire common room. "What about you? Hell Pansy, you're more than okay on your own. Why don't you ask one of your boyfriends to buy you something special for Valentine's Day? Eh?"

"What?" Pansy demanded, her face reddening and making Draco see for the first time why some people thought she looked like a pug.

He rolled his eyes. "Oh please! You've shagged more guys in this room than I can count on one hand! Am I right Montague? Pucey? I know I caught you in a broom closet with Warrington and his pants were down. And don't forget Flint two years ago and Bole last year? Who else am I forgetting Pansy? Huh? How many other guys have you shagged while you're so incredibly in love with me?"

"You jerk!" Pansy shrieked. "You've ignored me for how many years and when I turned to someone for comfort you throw it back in my face!"

"I'm not throwing it back in your face, Pansy. I don't love you and I don't want to marry you and I'm telling you now that if I can find a way out of the betrothment, I'm getting it."

Pansy glared at him. "You wouldn't dare! We're getting married in July, Draco! Nothing is going to change that!"

"I'll change that! I'm tired of having my life decided for me! I'm tired of everything! Leave me the hell alone!" He demanded.

Tears welled up in Pansy's eyes before she stormed up the stairs to her dorm. Guilt swam through his system a bit but he didn't care. She needed to know that being with her was against his will. Neither one of them had agreed to get married but were being forced into it by their parents. He sighed and his eyes sought Delilah's across the room.

She was looking at him, which surprised him enough to make him smile and for his heart to pound. Her eyes were intense and what he saw in them told him that she disapproved a bit but at the same time seemed to be proud. He wasn't sure why. He was getting to his feet and walking towards her before he knew what he was doing.

"Hey Delilah," he replied softly.

She stared into his eyes for a moment. "Hi. I almost feel bad for Pansy. Almost."

He laughed. "I know I was rude to her but she just doesn't get the



point. We were arranged to marry before we were even a year old. I don't want to get married in July and I don't want to marry her."

"Why July?" Delilah asked.

"Because that's her seventeenth birthday. I turn seventeen in May."

She nodded. "Malfoy, do you like me?"

He glanced at her in surprise. "Why?"

"Because Pansy is always accusing me of stealing you away and she says it's my fault that you're always staring at me. Do you fancy me?"

"Does it matter? You hate me."

Delilah nodded, standing up. "No, it doesn't matter, I was just curious."

He watched her walk away and sighed. Yeah, he really hated Valentine's Day.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bill finished writing his letter to Ginny and sealed the envelope before sending it away with his owl just as Fleur came into the room.

"Hey beautiful."

She smiled at him and curled into his lap. "Who are you zending letters to on zis day?"

"My incredible Spanish mistress. She has hands and a mouth like you wouldn't believe. The things she does to a man when his fiancée is out of the room."

Fleur laughed and kissed him softly. "I will 'ave to keel zis woman."

Bill grinned. "Yeah. The letter's just to Gin. I need to ask her something is all."

She nodded and turned to straddle him in the chair. "I theenk I 'ave moch better plans for you."

He hardened and slipped his hands up her back. "Oh, yeah? What kind of plans?"

Fleur leaned down to whisper something in his ear so outrageous that he blushed.

"Merlin woman! Let's not waste a moment." He scooped her up into his arms and practically ran into the bedroom, dropping her down onto the bed.

She laughed and cupped his cheek. "I love you, Bill."

He leaned down to kiss her softly. "I can't wait to marry you." Then he brought his mouth to hers.

\*\*\*\*\*

Emma lay across the bed, incredibly spent and satisfied. She reached over to pat Charlie's naked bum. "You never fail to amaze me!"

He grinned cheekily and rolled over to look at her. "I try my best. I don't think I can move. Ever."

She laughed and moved to cuddle. "I always thought you were dreamy but I must admit I never thought the day would come when I would end up in bed with Charlie Weasley."

"What can I say? I'm a sex god."

She snorted. "Right."

"Emma, can I ask you something?"

She nodded. "Sure."

“You love Gin like a sister, right?”

Emma glanced at him in surprise. “Yes, I do. Ginevra and I get along wonderfully. Why?”

Charlie sighed and managed to prop himself up on his elbows. “Where do you see this going? I mean, between us?”

Emma sat up. “What do you mean?”

“I mean, I live in Romania and you in New York. This can’t work, right?”

“Work?” Emma asked. “Charlie I thought we were just having a good time. What are you looking for?”

He grinned. “A good time. Gin just got me all worried by something she said. She seems to think we’re going to get married or something.”

Emma paled. “Marriage?” She squeaked, tugging the covers up over her breasts. “No, no, no, I am not getting married, we’re not getting married. Right?”

Charlie laughed. “Well, just look at you.” He slid his hand up to tug the sheet away and nibbled on the spot. “And here I was worried you might have the same ideas.”

“Just because I’m a woman doesn’t mean that I automatically want to get married and have kids! I’m here strictly for your body!”

He chuckled. “Nice to know. So I’m only good for shagging then?”

She sighed as his lips roamed over her shoulders. “Not only, but you’re pretty damn good at it.”

“Pretty damn good?” He growled. “I can do better than that!”

She gasped when he crushed his lips to hers. “Mmm, I like the way your mind works.”

He grinned. "Happy Bloody Valentine's Day."

She laughed and raked her nails over his back. "So far I'm not complaining." Then he silenced her with a kiss.

\*\*\*\*\*

Demelza sat in the Gryffindor common room trying to pretend that it wasn't Valentine's Day. She was technically dating Geoff Hooper but since their first date was cancelled because of the Hogsmeade trip, she figured it didn't really count. So she wasn't getting a Valentine's Day celebration. She was alright with it though, or she had been until she saw the little scene across the room.

Andrea Donald, a fifth-year-girl who shared a room with Ginny was curled up on Colin's lap snogging him senseless. Colin seemed to be happily enjoying himself too as his hands roamed over her behind in enthusiasm. Demelza glowered darkly at them.

It wasn't his fault and she knew that as he had no idea how she felt. He thought she was too young but he was wrong. One day he would realize that. She had to cling to that. She sighed as she watched Colin paw at Andrea.

Valentine's Day sucked.

\*\*\*\*\*

Neville found himself pushed back against the wall of a broom closet on Valentine's Day, Luna's small hands raking over his back and her legs wrapped around his waist. He wasn't complaining in the least but was much more interested in the way her body felt pressed so close to his. Her tongue danced along his jaw and around his lips. He let out a small whimper when she took his bottom lip between her teeth.

"Luna," he murmured against her lips, his fingers digging into her hips.

He tore his mouth away from hers and trailed down her neck, surprised when she tugged her shirt open to give him more access.

He continued to follow the journey over her exposed skin and she gasped when he nipped and nibbled lightly.

He still wasn't quite sure how they had ended up here. They had been walking hand in hand through the halls and Neville had given her an exotic plant that bloomed different colours. She had thanked him and then the next thing he knew here he was. Not that he was complaining.

His eyes widened when Luna began to tug his shirt out of his pants and then he just groaned when her hands roamed over his chest.

"Neville," she whispered, looking up into his eyes.

"Yeah?" He asked, his voice hoarse.

"I'm going to take terrible advantage of you."

Neville grinned sheepishly. "Okay."

Luna grinned and brought her lips back to his, taking all thoughts completely out of Neville's mind.

\*\*\*\*\*

James woke up early on Valentine's Day and when he rolled over and looked at the woman next to him his heart swelled. It had been fifty-three days since Lily had returned to him, not that he was counting of course. But every morning he woke up with the same reaction. He couldn't believe that she was here. After spending eleven years without sleeping beside her it was hard to get used to the feeling that she was there.

He moved closer to her, wrapping an arm around her waist and burying his face in the crook of her neck. She let out a small sleepy moan and he grinned.

"Lily."

"Mmm," she moaned. "Not morning yet."

He grinned and began to nibble his way over to her ear. "But it is."

Her eyes opened and those gorgeous emerald green eyes stared into his. "James?"

"Yeah?"

"Where is your hand?"

He grinned wickedly as his hand continued to stroke over her bum. "Enjoying itself. Where are your hands?"

She rolled her eyes and then groaned when his lips moved down her body. "Jamie, I'm not even awake yet!"

"Mmm, I am."

"I noticed." She replied with a laugh as he rolled on top of her. She fisted her hands in his hair and pulled his face to hers for a long kiss. "I love you."

James smiled down at her. "I love you too. Happy Valentine's Day."

She smiled. "Valentine's Day, wow, time flies, eh?"

He nodded. "Aye it does. I've got something for you." He rolled over the bed and reached into the drawer of his nightstand and pulled out a dark blue book and handed it to her. "It's not much and nothing expensive or costly at all. But it's something that I had planned to give you for Valentine's Day before ... well, it didn't happen."

Lily brushed her hair out of her eyes and took the book from him, sitting up in bed before she opened it up. Inside, she recognized his writing immediately. "What is it, James?"

He grinned and kissed her softly. "Just read it. I'm going to go get breakfast in bed."

Lily watched him pull some pants on before he headed out of the

room and she turned back to the book. It was a little battered in the corners and she wondered if this was a journal of some sort. She had read through the journals James had given her of everything that she had missed as well as the letters that Harry had written home from school. Now she opened the book again and began to read:

*July 1968 ...*

*So I met this kid today at the cottage, he's really crazy and way into pranks. His name is Sirius Black and I think we became friends instantly. I was walking through the park with Da's old dog Baby, when I ran into him. Or he fell into me! He jumped out of the tree, swinging from a rope and knocked me over. He laughed almost right away and then helped me up. The next thing I knew he had conned me into having a water balloon fight using his mum's bras. It was fun.*

*Mum was not too pleased when she found out what I had been doing but Da thought it was funny. He tried not to laugh though because Mum was glaring at him. Sirius seems like he'll be a great new friend.*

*August 1969 ...*

*I haven't written in a while I know but I've just been having so much fun! Sirius has practically moved in with us. I don't know much about his family but he doesn't seem to get along too well with them. Mum has been babying him almost as much as she does me, it's kind of fun though because now I have someone to complain about it with.*

*I met the Blacks today — I know odd that I've known Sirius for over a year and have never met his family — and they're kind of scary. Mrs. Black was angry at Mum and Da for having Sirius over; apparently he was supposed to be being punished for some prank he played on his brother Regulus. But Sirius just keeps sneaking out and returning to my house. He says his parents think he's not evil enough, whatever that means. Anyway, the summer's almost over and Sirius lives in London. We plan to owl each other all the time!*

*1st September 1972 ...*

*Wow, so I just found this old journal buried in my trunk and decided*

*that I should start writing in it again. I'm at Hogwarts now — first night of school and Sirius is in Gryffindor with me. He says he's in trouble now and that his parents will probably disown him. They are just crazy if you ask me. But I already told him even if they do he can live with me. My parents love him.*

*Anyway, I met this girl today on the train. Her name is Lily Evans and she's got the most amazing green eyes. I told Sirius about how brilliant they were and he thinks I'm sick. But really, they just said something to me. Funny kind of, I mean, why would a girl's eyes do that? Oh well, not important. I'll try to keep this updated a bit more*

...

Lily flipped through the journal. The next few pages were pranks and things he had done and other stuff in his life but she stopped to read an entry from their third year when she found her name.

*September 1974 ...*

*I think I'm sick. I mean, something has to be wrong with me. Padfoot thinks I'm dying and Moony just shrugs. I don't know. But when Evans walked into our compartment today to tell us off for this great prank we pulled on some first years, I just lost it. She looked amazing. Her red hair was all piled on top of her head and her green eyes were flashing. When had she grown up? My hands were actually sweating. Then she looked at me, right into my eyes and said something about me being irresponsible. I think I'm in love with her.*

*I know, I know, it's the most ridiculous thing in the whole world but honestly, it was like I was seeing her in an entirely new light. Maybe it's just a disease. It will go away ...*

Lily stared at the words for a long moment. Third year? He had fallen in love with her that young? She knew that he had fancied her then but love? She continued to read, flipping from different times.

*January 1975 ...*

*Okay I finally caved. I asked Evans out. She rejected me and actually*



*laughed at me. I wonder why? Well, okay, I don't actually wonder as I have been kind of a jerk to her. But still, it kind of hurt. So in retaliation I asked out Emmeline Vance. She's pretty and all but she's not Evans.*

*March 1977 ...*

*Do you know what Evans said to me today? She told me that she would not go out with me if I was the last person on earth! She said she would not be one of James Potter's girls and that if I could learn to treat women with respect it would be a miracle. Okay, yes, I was pissed off at this. Do you know why all of my relationships have failed? Because of Evans. I'm in love with her and I can't get her out of my mind. Girls know it and they get frustrated and pissed. I've had just as many girls dump me as I've dumped them. Why won't she still go out with me? I've been asking her for two years; don't you think that would give her a clue? Sirius is telling me to get over it and go shag somebody. How's that supposed to help? Well, considering its Sirius, I suppose that's his cure for everything ...*

Lily looked up when the bedroom door opened and James walked in with a tray of food.

"Alright, I got bacon and eggs and chips it will be great." His eyes fell upon the journal. "Uh, guess you're really flying through that."

Lily waited until he sat down next to her before she turned to him. "Why do you love me?"

James glanced at her in surprise. "What?"

Lily turned on the bed so that she was facing him. "Why do you love me? You've been in love with me since you were thirteen and I treated you like ... I was horrible to you ... why do you love me?"

James put his juice down and kissed her deeply. "Because I always knew that you were secretly in love with me."

Lily laughed. "James, I hated you! You were this guy who acted like he was better than everyone else; who went through girls like other

guys went through ink pots. Why did you put up with me? How did you know that I would end up with you?"

James sighed and pulled her into his lap. "I didn't. The only thing I knew was that I loved you more than anything in the world and that maybe if I worked hard enough you would see what you were missing."

"And if at the end of seventh year, you still hadn't won my heart?"

He grinned. "I think you would have gotten a new neighbour. I wouldn't have given up, Lils, not until you had least given me a chance."

She smiled and kissed him softly. "I'm glad you never gave up on me."

"I never will."

Lily ran her hand over the stubble on his face. "I hate to inflate your ego but you've definitely only grown more handsome over time."

He laughed and slipped his hand under her night shirt. "Too late, ego's way inflated now."

She smiled and ran her fingers over his lips. "James?"

"Hmm?" He asked, as he moved his lips down to nibble at her collar bone.

She arched her neck back and grinned. "Make love to me."

His grin widened as he moved back to her lips. "Oh, honey, I planned on it."

She laughed when he tossed her back down onto the bed and positioned himself over her. "Good." Then she pulled his mouth down to hers.

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When Lavender returned from her afternoon Valentine's Day date with Justin, she could only sigh. He had been sweet and given her flowers and chocolates and then they had kissed a bit before he'd started talking again. It had hardly been romantic and considering that Justin had spent the entire date talking about himself. She figured times hadn't changed. She knew it was wrong and she knew it was horrible but she had found herself telling him it wasn't working out. He had simply shrugged at her and said that he didn't think she had a cold heart but apparently he had been wrong. She groaned at that. Why had she broken up with him on Valentine's Day?

She sighed and walked into her dormitory. It didn't matter. She was just glad that they weren't together any more. It made it all easier. That was when she noticed the envelope on her bed and knew instantly who it was from. She rushed forward, pulling the curtains closed around her as she ripped it open and began to read:

**To the precious Lavender,**

**Well, looks as if fate does not want us to meet, with Hogsmeade being cancelled as such. I suppose I am not surprised though as I just keep finding myself at dead end roads when it comes to you. A friend of mine asked me today, what am I going to do? Am I going to wait the two months before the next Hogsmeade trip before I reveal myself to you? I don't think I can wait that long.**

**Seeing your beautiful face and your beautiful self every day is hard to take. I noticed the disappointment in your eyes when Dumbledore announced the trip was cancelled and my heart just broke. Those beautiful hazel eyes filled up with tears and at that moment I wanted nothing more then to pull you into my arms and tell you everything would be alright. I wanted it so badly it hurt and I knew that I had to do something.**

**At the same time, I can't help but question if what I'm doing is right. You have a boyfriend and I know this and I do not want to ruin that relationship. But at the same time it seems that every time I try to take a chance, you are with some lucky bloke. I'm in**

love with you. I have been since our third year. When we meet, I will tell you the moment as I'm sure you remember it clearly. You used to tease me about it all the time though I don't think you knew what that meant to me. It was at that very moment that I realized I was in love with you.

It seems like I'm giving it away but I'm not at least I don't think so. I want to see you Lavender; I want you to know who I am. This Friday night, meet me in the Room of Requirement at midnight.

I hope to see you soon.

**Love your Secret Admirer**

Lavender folded up the parchment, nerves in her stomach. He wanted to meet her still. Third year? What happened that year that he was sure she'd remember? The only thing she clearly remembered from third year was when Peeves had pushed her down the stairs and Seamus had caught her in his arms. But that was a ridiculously embarrassing moment and it was hardly Seamus who was in love with her. He would surely have told her otherwise, right? She shook the thoughts from her head. She would just have to think harder about things that happened in third year and who they involved. Otherwise, Friday night was the night she would find out. She grinned to herself at the thought and then kicked off her shoes, curling up on her bed and just smiling wistfully at the thought.

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Fred sat behind the desk in *Weasleys Wizard Wheezes* flipping through the sales book. He used the back of the quill to scratch his forehead, but then realized that it only tickled so used his hand. He was bored and a bit depressed. George was out probably shagging his girlfriend and he was here by himself on Valentine's Day going through the sales books. When the bell sounded above the door he didn't even look up.

"We're closed."

The clicking of heels made him look up and his eyes widened.

“Closed even for an old friend?”

“Lina,” Fred replied, jumping off his chair and yanking her towards him. Before she could protest his lips were on hers and he was drowning. She always made him drown. He still wondered every day why the hell he had broken up with her.

She shoved him back. “You prat! You can’t just go around kissing people! What if I’m married or engaged or something?”

Fred grinned. “Are you?”

She sighed. “No.”

Fred pulled her close again. “I missed you, Angelina. What are you doing here?”

Angelina Johnson sighed, her dark brown hair was all in tiny braids that she had pulled out of her face and she was wearing a sexy black number that made Fred’s mouth water. Her dark brown eyes were grinning at him in amusement. He ran a hand down over her chocolate coloured skin.

“Did you miss me?”

She laughed. “You never change. I ran into George over at some club and he said you were here all alone on Valentine’s Day and I thought well let’s go see how he’s doing. I missed you too.”

Fred grinned and tugged her close for another kiss. “It’s been almost a year since I’ve seen you and yet you still make my heart pound in my chest.”

Angelina shrugged. “You were the jerk who broke it off.”

Fred sighed. “I know. Want to give me another chance?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. The last time I gave you a chance we

ended up naked on the rug in front of the common room fire.”

Fred grinned broadly. “That was a good night.”

She rolled her eyes. “I’m just saying.”

He pulled her closer. “Are you trying to tell me that you want to get naked again? ‘Cause I happen to have a completely empty store here at my disposal.”

She laughed. “I planned to go out, not get naked with you. Fred, we haven’t seen each other in over a year, don’t you think that we should take things slowly.”

He shrugged and ran his finger tips over her arm again. “Why? We never took it slowly before?”

Her eyes met his and she laughed and then before he could comment she jumped him, causing him to stumble back a few steps. “Do you think I can still make you scream?”

Fred grinned. “I’ll sound proof the room, just in case.”

She grinned and kissed him softly. “I really have missed you.”

“Missed you more.”

She smiled when he leaned in to kiss her. When Fred’s mouth met hers she knew for the first time since she had watched him fly out of Hogwarts on his broom that she finally had what she wanted, Fred Weasley.

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## Chapter 80: Good News

**Author’s Notes:** Kate and Saz are my rocks – or so Saz says haha – well I’m dedicating this chapter to Matt because he deserves it – I’m

glad your back:D

Oh yeah – so my midterms aren't over but SNOW DAY today so I decided to write – haha don't kill me bout the ending;) plz review!!:D

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## Chapter Eighty — Good News

James walked into Hogwarts, running his fingers through his hair automatically. He caught himself and grinned, wondering if it was just some sort of reflex as he remembered doing that often when he had been at school. He headed straight to Dumbledore's office wondering again just how he was going to do this. He and Lily had discussed it last night and both agreed that it was the only way to go. They needed to make sure that Voldemort didn't get any farther ahead.

He was just about to knock when he heard Dumbledore ask him to come in. He stepped inside, closing the door behind him. "How do you always know when someone's there?"

Dumbledore grinned, his blue eyes twinkling. "Oh, one of life's mysteries I suppose. Now what can I do for you, James?"

James took a seat in front of him. "I don't know if you've heard but Lucius Malfoy is accusing me of kidnapping his son and is trying to get the ministry to imprison me and to return Draco to him. He claims that I've placed Draco under the Imperius and that not only am I a danger to him but to Hogwarts as well. As Draco is still a minor, he's working on trying to pull him from the school."

Dumbledore's eyebrows moved together slightly. "Hmm, I did get a letter from Lucius earlier this morning, telling me that Draco would no longer be attending this school and that Durmstrang had accepted him."

"We can't allow that Albus!" James exclaimed. "Not only does he know too much but he came to us for protection and his parents disowned him! He's our responsibility! Damn it! Lily and I promised him that he would have a home in our home."

Dumbledore nodded. "I am aware of that. What do you suppose we

do about it?"

James sighed, dragging his fingers through his hair in frustration. "Lily and I talked about it last night. We're willing to file for legal guardianship of Draco. He turns seventeen in May. That's only three months away but until then his father could do a lot of damage."

"I agree. How are you going to obtain that? It takes a lot to pull that off and Lucius will fight you for it."

"I know. I was going to pull out the nobility crap. I figure it will get me what I want."

Dumbledore smiled. "You never did put much store by your title. Alright, have you spoken to Harry or Draco about this yet?"

James shook his head. "No, I was hoping I could do that here today."

Dumbledore nodded. "Of course. I have a meeting at the ministry but you are welcome to use my office. I'll have them both sent up here immediately."

"Thanks."

Dumbledore smiled. "Not a problem and I think it is you who should get the thanks. You're doing a wonderful thing for young Draco."

James watched him leave before he began to pace. He really hoped that he was doing the right thing. He only had to wait fifteen minutes before Harry and Draco stepped into the room.

"Hey Da, what's going on?" Harry asked as he took a seat.

James grinned. "Well, I got some good news and some bad news."

Draco smirked. "Let me guess, it involves my father."

James glanced at Draco in surprise. "What do you mean?"

Draco shrugged. "He wrote to me. Told me that he's removing me



from Hogwarts. I was hoping to talk to Dumbledore about it. Is that what you're here about? Does he have the right to do that?"

James sighed. "Aye, he does."

Draco closed his eyes. "Damn!"

"No, I think I have a way around it, which would be the good news."

"How Da? Until Draco's seventeen doesn't Lucius have total control over him?" Harry asked.

James nodded. "He does. But Lily and I are hoping to change that. Draco, if Lily and I obtain guardianship over you, Lucius can't touch you."

Draco's eyes whipped up to James'. "What like adopt me?"

James grinned. "More or less. It would really only be until you turn seventeen because once your seventeen you legally can stand up to your father and anything he says."

Draco shook his head. "There's no way that Father that would let that happen. He'd fight you."

James grinned. "Oh, I think I have a way. If I can manage it, is it alright with you? You already know that our home is always open."

"Yeah, I ... thanks." He murmured.

James nodded. "Alright, Harry, I need to talk to you privately for a moment. Draco, I'll keep you updated on everything."

Draco nodded. "Alright." He started to walk away and then he stopped, turning to look at them. "Nobody's ever cared enough to fight for my well-being before. I just wanted to say ... well, thanks." Then he closed the door behind him.

Harry stared at his father. "You're adopting Draco?"

“You get along with him now so don’t tell me you’re complaining.”

“No, not complaining, just surprised. How are you going to get around Malfoy? He uses anything and everything to get his way. The Malfoy name gets around.” Harry replied.

“I know.” James replied. “I’m going to pull out the Potter name.”

“Excuse me when I say: huh?”

James laughed. “The Potter legacy. Do you remember how I told you that I never put much store by it?”

Harry nodded. “You’re going to use it. How will that help?”

James sighed. “Alright, I guess better explain this to you. I don’t like to use it because I don’t deserve the title it’s just been something that was passed down for generations and blah blah blah blah. However, it has its purposes. About three hundred years ago, Adrian Potter rescued one of Queen Mary’s ladies in waiting. I don’t know the exact details of it but I believe she was kidnapped and he brought her back safely. I’m not even sure why as she was definitely a muggle. But he saved her and the queen was impressed with his daring. He was sent to fight to help stop James II from regaining the throne and when he proved himself there in battle the king awarded him the title. I don’t put much by it as it is very old. But anyway he became Lord Adrian Potter, Duke of Draíochta and he opted to stay and build his palace in Scotland. He chose Glasgow and he took over the Potter mansion from his dying uncle, Julian Potter, who was left with no heirs. Potter Manor as you know was originally built in 1465 so it was already a little over two hundred years old when the new Duke took over. He fixed it up and used his money to make it have all the new fashions and he added rooms. By the time he was finished in the early 1700s the manor looked very much like it does today. The east wing had sixty rooms and so did the west — obviously the house has been kept up and fixed up since then but it was under Adrian Potter that the revamping really took place. Anyway, he called the new house — Potter Manor a.k.a. Glasgow Hall. His son, David Potter became the Earl of Glasgow. The title has continued on since then.” James explained.

Harry nodded. "So you're technically the Duke of Draíochta then ,right?"

James winced slightly. "Yeah."

Harry laughed. "So am I an earl?"

"Yup but like I said I like to avoid as much as I can. Girls chased me in school because they knew about the title and the money. They all wanted to be the Lady Potter, Duchess of Draíochta. You never had that problem you instead got the Boy Who Lived." James explained. "I think we both would have preferred neither."

Harry nodded. "Yeah. I didn't realize that you were a Duke and I was an Earl I mean I just ... I don't know I just thought okay so when I'm older I'll be Lord Potter. I mean, I knew but I didn't ... think."

James grinned. "Well, that's alright, it's not a big deal or anything; I just don't set much store by it. Now that your mother is back she's actually going to make me attend social functions again so when we go you will get to be introduced as Harry Potter, Earl of Glasgow and your wife would be known as Countess of Glasgow if one wanted to get technical. It's all so confusing I'd rather not get into it." James replied, a slightly pained look on his face.

Harry grimaced. "Tell me about it. Social functions? What exactly does that entail?"

James laughed. "Balls and charity functions. I'm supposed to attend so many every year and I used to with Lily until we went into hiding and then I just stopped. Both muggle as well as wizarding. Three a year are more than enough. I still sent money to show my contribution but I never attended any of the functions."

"Alright, never mind, I don't want to know. But how is using that going to help?" Harry asked. "I don't get it."

James grinned. "People have this automatic thing when they hear a title, it's like we're special or something so we have more power over

them. I don't know. But I'm going to try."

Harry nodded. "Alright, well good luck. He needs us because his father's an asshole."

James snorted. "He is yeah and don't let your mother hear you talk like that."

Harry grinned. "I like that. Knowing that she might lecture me on language. It's nice."

"I know." He leaned over to ruffle his son's hair and then pulled him close for a hug and kissed his forehead. "I'll see you later. I just wanted to talk about the guardian thing. I'll let you know what happens and Draco too."

"Thanks Da."

James grinned. "No problem."

"Oh Da!"

"Yeah?" James asked.

"I got something to tell you later — but Uncle Remus needs to hear too, it's about Uncle Sirius and its brilliant! Ginny pranked him so bad!"

James grinned. "She did, eh? Alright, I want details on this one."

Harry grinned. "I'll write a long letter."

"Even better. Talk to you later."

He left the office and he winced inwardly. He hated playing the nobility card and now he had to go talk to Scrimgeour. He sighed. The things one did for those they loved.

\*\*\*\*\*

A few days later, Harry walked into Sirius' office as requested. He wondered what his godfather wanted as he had actually gotten a letter asking him to meet him there. He closed the door behind him and grinned when he saw Sirius, James, and Remus standing there.

"What's going on?" Harry asked.

Sirius glared at him. "You are very evil and I think that Gorgeous has had a very bad influence on you."

Harry laughed. "What do you mean?"

James grinned. "Well, Moony and I enjoyed your letter so much that we had to come and see dear old Padfoot here in person as soon as possible."

Remus grinned. "Definitely. Hey Padfoot, is Snivelis built or is he kind of chubby?"

"Is he dreamy?" James asked, trying to hold back his laughter.

Sirius glared at them. "That was a sick, sick prank! I've had nothing but nightmares! I'm scarred for life! And none of you even have decency to care!"

James grinned and transfigured Sirius' desk into a life size blow up doll of Snape. "But Sirius," he murmured in a high pitched voice. "I love you."

"Oh, real funny," Sirius murmured as Remus and Harry burst out laughing.

Remus grinned. "She's got class. That's one hell of a good prank! How did she do it Harry?"

Harry shrugged. "She won't give me the exact details but I know the twins helped her and she slipped something into his drink at dinner. I know she talked to Aunt Lexy about it because she was in on it."

Sirius nodded. "She was being seductive all day. Just making me wait

until the prank kicked in.”

“So let me get this straight,” James replied, trying not to laugh as he thought about it. “Okay, so you were like getting ready to take the plunge so to speak and instead of Lexy you were looking down at naked Snivelis?”

“Yeah and I would freak out and then I’d see Lexy and hear Lexy and I would just think that I was going insane or something. Why the hell would I be thinking about Snape naked at all let alone just when I was about to shag my wife? Eh?”

Remus and James busted out laughing again before they could stop it. “Hell I don’t know, Prongs do you know?”

James shook his head no as he laughed. “Merlin, that was a brilliant prank! Ginny should have been a marauder — along with Fred and George.”

Harry grinned. “Ah, so I’m not a marauder then? I’m hurt.”

James laughed. “You’re not a marauder my arse! I know it was you who planted the fireworks in my clean underwear when you were eight when I got out of the shower. You were good for small pranks when you were younger but I’d say you mellowed. Not getting into trouble as much either.”

Sirius snorted. “That’s because Gorgeous has him tied around her little finger.”

Harry grinned. “Yeah she does and I love every second of it.”

Sirius sighed. “Will one of you guys please change my desk back? That thing is starting to freak me out.”

Remus snorted in laughter. “But he loves you, Sirius.”

“Oh shut it!” Sirius exclaimed, trying to suppress his grin.

The office door opened, interrupting their light bantering as Lexy

stepped in. She noticed the doll in the corner and rolled her eyes.  
“You guys.”

James grinned. “Lex, we gotta have a little fun.”

Lexy walked over and wrapped her arms around her husband.  
“Prank’s over, now leave him alone.”

James and Remus pouted before they left the room along with Harry, closing the door behind them.

“Speaking of being wrapped around someone’s finger,” James replied.  
“Lexy sure has him tied up in knots.”

Remus nodded. “He loves every minute of it. I know I do.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, so did you guys summon me down here just to tease Uncle Sirius?”

James grinned. “No, that was a bonus. A really good bonus.” He replied, trying to suppress his laughter.

Remus laughed. “Yeah. Anyway, I got to get going, I told Tonks that I’d only be gone an hour. I’ll see you two later.”

Harry watched his uncle walk away before he turned to James. “You got news on the guardian thing? ‘Cause that’s fast work, it’s only been two days.”

James nodded. “I know but like I said, I used the noble card. So anyway, I got it. Do you know where he is? I’d like to tell him in person and well ... alone.”

“I get it. I’ll find him for you, Da. Where are you going to be?”

“Dumbledore’s office is fine. Talk to you later and give Ginny a big kiss of thanks for me — that really was a brilliant prank.”

Harry grinned. “Sure thing. See you.”

He hurried off in the opposite direction and practically ran into Delilah. "Oh sorry! I didn't see you."

She nodded. "It's alright. You seem to be in a hurry."

"Yeah, I'm looking for Draco, do you know where he's at?"

Her eyebrows rose in surprise. "Why would I know where he's at? I'm surprised you even want to."

Harry stared at her for a minute. "You know, I agree with him on one point you're really beautiful but you're cold."

"Excuse me?" Delilah demanded, her eyes lighting up in shock. "I'm cold."

He nodded. "Yeah. Draco's changed a lot this year and for the better. He's never been anything like his parents except for the arrogance. He's definitely not his father. It would do well for you to remember that."

She glared at him. "If you only knew what I knew! Then you'd understand!"

Harry nodded. "I do know. Draco told me. But he's only a year older than you, so what does that tell you? He wasn't the one who committed such a crime. Now excuse me, I need to find him."

He turned to walk away and he could feel her eyes on him. He had known almost as soon as he spoke that it was none of his business but he had been dying to tell her off. Draco always looked so miserable as he stared after her with longing. She would be good for him; she just had to get past her anger. Harry sighed and headed into the library. He saw Ted and Dana sitting at a table, their heads bent close.

"Hey you two."

Ted grinned. "Hey Harry! It's been a while, have a seat."



Harry nodded. "Yeah, I know. I've been busy this year."

"So we noticed. What's going on?"

"I'm actually looking for Draco, any idea where he's at?"

Ted nodded. "Yeah, he's on the other side of the library or he was anyway. I haven't seen him leave." He turned to grin at Dana. "But then again I've been a little distracted."

Dana smiled at him. "He's down there. See you, Harry." Then she pulled Ted's face close to kiss him.

Harry grinned at them as he headed to the back of the library. Draco was sitting there with his Transfiguration books open in front of him. Blaise and Daphne were sitting nearby, snogging quietly. Harry sat down next to him.

"Those two are having a good time."

"Huh?" Draco asked his eyes unfocused for a minute and then he noticed them and grinned. "Right."

"Sorry to bother you but uh ... my Da's here and he wants to talk to you."

Draco's eyes met his as he put his quill down. "Father's making me move isn't he?"

Harry shook his head. "No he's not. I don't know the exact details as Da wanted to tell you himself but he's waiting in Dumbledore's office right now. But from what I gathered you're free."

"Harry?"

"Yeah?"

"You're really lucky, do you know that?"

Harry smiled. "Yeah I know." He turned and left the library hoping that

Draco found happiness soon.

Draco watched Harry leave the library and he took a deep breath. He was kind of nervous to go up there. He wasn't as giving or as carefree as the Potters or the Weasleys were and he wasn't sure exactly what they wanted from him. They wanted to keep him safe and he got that but they still treated him so ... well nice. James and Lily had opened their home for him, giving him a bedroom and a place to stay whenever he needed it. James had even worked on his betrothment, helping him find a way to get out of it if he could. He sighed and wondered what he had done to deserve people in his life that actually cared about his well-being.

He packed up his books before he headed upstairs to Dumbledore's office and knocked softly. James answered and he grinned at him.

"Hey, come on in! Dumbledore gave me use of his office for a bit." James replied, closing the door behind Draco.

He stepped inside, his eyes closed for a moment. "Harry told me that it was good news."

James nodded. "I got it. As of this morning at nine a.m., Lily and I are you're legal guardians. This means that until you are out of school we are responsible for you, even if you turn seventeen in May."

"My father didn't win?"

James shook his head. "No, he lost. He was actually fined five hundred galleons when I was through and I got the guardianship. It's all good and it's all worked out."

Draco grinned. "Brilliant! I mean ... thank you so much ... I don't even ... thank you."

James nodded in understanding before he stepped forward and pulled Draco close for a hug. "You're welcome."

Draco grinned at him. "You've done so much for me, James, I mean ... when I went to Harry to ask for help ... I never expected ... thank

you.”

James nodded. “No problem.”

“Can I ask you something about the betrothment?”

“Yeah of course, did something happen?”

“Kind of, it was just the way that Pansy said something. I thought you said that I didn’t have to get married until next summer?”

James nodded. “Yeah, technically you don’t as most people usually wait until your finished Hogwarts but a tentative date was set for the 9th of July 1997 which is the day Pansy turns seventeen. What did she say?”

“She said that we were getting married in July. I didn’t catch it at first and didn’t think but ... that’s five bloody months away!”

“Yeah ... they can push it for then and there’s nothing that we can do to stop it except for what I said before, you have to find someone else to marry by then.”

Draco’s face fell into his hands. “I don’t want to marry her. Merlin I don’t. She’s beautiful yes but ... I don’t like her in any way! She’s rude and well frankly a bit of a bitch!”

James nodded. “I’m sorry about that, there’s nothing that I can do there. As your guardian I might be able to postpone it until next summer but I doubt it. It was a signed contract and the Parkinson’s get the final say on the wedding day.”

“Thanks. You’ve done enough really, but thanks.”

“It’s no problem. I’ll talk to you later I’ve got a meeting at the ministry for an ongoing investigation. I’ll see you later. Good luck figuring out the betrothment.”

Draco nodded and watched him leave and as he did he realized something for the first time. This was what having a family was like.

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Ginny stepped into Sirius' office a few days later and grinned at him. "Is it safe to come in here?"

Sirius glared at her. "Yeah, you're safe. Lex has threatened me into not punishing you. Consider yourself lucky."

Ginny grinned. "It was a well-deserved prank, you know. You really did have it coming."

He laughed. "Look, I'm sorry about the tattoo thing I wasn't thinking honestly. And hell ... it was a pretty damn good prank."

"I'm glad you enjoyed it. Now what's up?"

He smiled. "Nothings up; you're the one who came to visit me."

She laughed. "Right. Anyway, Harry said you wanted to see him about something but I thought I'd come down and say haha you deserved it."

"Brat!"

She blew him a saucy kiss before she strolled out, grinning at Harry who was in the hall way. "Oops caught me."

Harry laughed and pulled her close. "I knew it. Having an affair with Sirius Black, I didn't think you would dare."

She laughed. "Caught me." She kissed him softly. "Mmm you taste much better."

"Good to know." He kissed her again and then sighed. "Okay, I'm going in to talk to him now. I'll meet you later in the common room."

She nodded. "Okay." She kissed him again and then headed to the common room.

Harry watched her go with a grin before he headed into Sirius' office. "Hey, what's going on?"

Sirius grinned. "Enjoying the show outside." He replied, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively.

Harry rolled his eyes, closing the door behind him. "Right."

"I wanted to talk to you about uh ... well okay it's a little embarrassing but about what I walked in on at the manor."

Harry blushed. "Oh, um, why?"

Sirius sighed. "Listen Harry, I love both you and Gin a lot. Ginny has come to mean a lot to me and she's like a goddaughter or a good friend and I ... hell you're not rushing her into anything are you?"

"NO! Of course not!" Harry exclaimed. "We haven't really ... this isn't really any of your business."

"I know. But when I walked in there ... I felt pride for you because, hey you were doing pretty good but at the same time I felt this fierce protectiveness over Ginny. It was weird."

Harry grinned. "Uncle Sirius, we're fine and we're not rushing into anything. Even if we were don't you think that Gin can keep me in line?"

The memory of the prank made him nod and wince. "Yeah."

"Well, then stop worrying." Harry replied. "Worry instead about your wife and your daughter."

Sirius nodded. "Got it. Oh, and Harry?"

"Yeah?"

"I didn't only call you here for that. Lily-Love's here and she wants to talk to you."

“Oh,” Harry replied. “Sure, where is she?”

“In my suite talking to Lex.”

Harry nodded. “Alright thanks. Want me to send Aunt Lexy to you?”

Sirius grinned. “Of course, maybe I can convince her into a quickie before class.”

Harry rolled his eyes and then he grinned. “With Aunt Lex or with Snape?”

“AHHHHHH! Don’t even make me remember that nightmare!” Sirius demanded, visibly shuddering.

Harry laughed. “Oops.”

He left the office wondering what his mum wanted and laughing at Sirius’ face. He found it odd and kind of soothing to know that within a week he had been visited by both of his parents. He knocked on the suite door and smiled up at Lexy when she opened it.

“Hey Professor, is Mum here?”

Lexy smiled. “Yeah, come on in Harry.”

He stepped inside and grinned at his mum. Lily was sitting on the couch drinking water. “Hello Harry.”

He grinned. “Hey Mum. Aunt Lexy, Uncle Sirius wants to talk to you in his office.”

Lexy nodded. “Talk my ass. The man’s hornier than a rabbit.”

Lily laughed. “He always was, don’t listen to his excuses.”

Lexy grinned. “Yeah, I’ll remember that. See you later.” She closed the door behind her when she left and Harry took a seat next to Lily.

“So, this is a surprise?”

Lily smiled and leaned over to kiss his cheeks. "Hopefully a good one."

Harry grinned. "Always, so what's up?"

She sighed. "God, you look like your father when you grin like that. That same wicked grin that used to make girls swoon at his feet."

"I try." He replied, grinning.

She laughed. "Obviously. Alright, well the reason I'm here ... I just found out today and ... this is hard to say and I'm not sure why."

"Is it about Draco?" Harry asked. "Because really I'm fine with the whole you adopting him thing."

Lily shook her head. "No, it's nothing to do with him. Harry, do you remember when we were in the kitchen and we were talking about well our lives and James came in?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah?"

She sighed. "Okay, I'm just going to say it because it's hard to do it any other way. I was at St. Mungo's this morning and I'm pregnant."

Harry's mouth dropped open. "As in you're going to have a baby?"

She nodded. "Yes. You're going to have a little baby brother or sister."

"I ... wow." He reached his hand out to place it on her stomach. "How long?"

Lily grinned. "I think since just after Christmas. I haven't told your father yet."

"Da's going to flip! Blimey! I'm going to be like a brother."

She laughed, tears in her eyes. "Yeah you are. I wasn't sure if you

had been serious or not when you said you wanted siblings but ... I always wanted more children."

Harry grinned and reached over to hug her. "Mum this is brilliant! The best news yet! You have to tell Da right away!"

She nodded. "I will. I just wanted to tell you first. You were my first baby and now you're almost all grown up. I missed out on so much with you and ... Harry I don't want you to feel like this baby will ever replace you."

He glanced at his mother in surprise. "Why would I ever think that? Mum, it's not your fault what happened and I know that you love me but you're right I'm almost an adult now and I don't really need a mother. Not in the way that this baby will. I love you and I love Da and I think it's great that you're having a baby. I kind of hope it's a girl."

Lily smiled. "A girl? Why?"

He shrugged. "So I can take care of her and have that relationship with her that Bill and Charlie have with Gin. There's such a huge age difference between them that they never really fought like Ginny and Ron did you know? Besides, I think I'd want to protect her."

"I'd like a little girl too. You're going to be a wonderful brother, Harry." She leaned over to kiss his cheek. "I was so nervous about telling you, for some reason I thought you'd be angry but I was wrong. Now I get to go home and watch the shock come over your father's face."

Harry laughed. "Mum?"

"Hmm?" She asked.

"I think you should take a picture of Da's shock."

Lily laughed. "You're as bad as the marauders." She kissed his cheek again and then she stood up, smiling when he pulled her close for a hug. "I love you and I'll use James' mirror to tell you how he reacted, okay?"



Harry grinned. "Deal."

He watched her make her way out of the suite and he grinned. He was going to have a baby brother or sister — how totally brilliant was that? He hurried out of the suite to tell Ginny the good news, a sloppy grin on his face.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lily ran into Sirius on her way out and she smiled at him. "Thanks for getting Harry for me."

Sirius grinned. "No problem, Lily-Love, you said it was important. I needed to talk to you, anyway."

She gave him a slightly puzzled look. "About what?"

"Remember how I mentioned before about Garrett and Julianna? Well, they are still refusing to leave. I don't know why I'm worried but I just have this feeling that they shouldn't be staying there." He explained.

Lily nodded. "I'll stop in and talk to them. But we can't force them to move closer to home, Sirius."

He sighed. "I know it's just that with Lex in her condition you think her parents would want to be closer. I know she'd like them to be."

Lily smiled. "Pregnancy is not a condition. It's alright to worry; I'll see what I can do."

He nodded. "Thanks. Are you leaving already?"

Lily nodded. "Yeah, I need to speak with James about something. I'll see you later."

She headed into McGonagall's office to use the floo as she wasn't really supposed to apparate when she was pregnant. It was too risky. She came out into the entrance hall just as James stepped down the stairs buttoning his shirt.

“Hey, where did you just come from?” James asked, pulling her close for a long kiss.

Lily smiled at him. “Hogwarts. I wanted to talk to Harry for a moment and Sirius is still worried about Garrett and Julianna.”

James nodded. “Yeah, we’ve got to try to get them into the manor. The neighbourhood they are in has been attacked a few times already.” He took her hand in his and led her into the kitchen. “So while you were out, I got off early and Maddy made us a romantic dinner for two.”

She smiled and wrapped her arms around him. “Oh really?”

He grinned. “Yeah.” He scooped her up into his arms making her laugh and he sat her down in the chair before he sat across from her. “Got a problem with that?”

“Not at all. Jamie, don’t you want to know what I spoke to Harry about?”

James grinned. “I figured we’d get around to it.”

She laughed. “I had some news to tell him, something that I thought I should run by him first.”

He gave her a puzzled look. “What kind of news?”

Lily picked up her glass of wine and poured it into his glass. “I’m not supposed to be drinking anything alcoholic.”

His brow furrowed slightly. “Why not?”

She stood up and slid into his lap, kissing him softly. Then she took both of his hands and placed them on her flat stomach. “Harry’s going to be a big brother.”

“Huh?” James asked, his eyes widening as he stared down at her stomach. “Harry’s going to be a ... we’re pregnant? Really?”

Lily laughed. "I'm pretty sure it's only me who's pregnant unless there's something that you want to tell me, James."

He grinned. "We're going to have another baby?"

She nodded and laughed when he stood up, spinning her in a quick circle. "I guess you're happy."

"Happy?" He exclaimed. "This is great! How do you feel? Do you need anything? What can I do for you? How would you like me to treat you? Are you hungry? Are you-?"

"JAMES!" She replied on a laugh. "I thought you might react a bit different this time. I'm fine."

He grinned and kissed her deeply. "Yeah, we're fine." Then he brought her lips back to his.

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Tonks glared at her husband from across the room as he put Daniel down to sleep. He cooed with him and kissed his cheeks, rocking him gently in his arms before he lay him down in his crib. She waited patiently for him to close the nursery door before she exploded on him.

"Why Remus?"

He sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. "Nymphadora, we've already been through this a thousand times!"

Tears rolled down Tonks' cheeks. "I don't care! You can't do this! I got you the potion and everything so you would be so much safer!"

Remus scooped her up into his arms and carried her into the bedroom, cuddling her into his lap on the bed. "We need to know what's going on, Dora. This is the only way. I'm the only person available to do this. You know that."

She sniffed and buried her face in his shoulder. "I'm being a baby and I know it! But damn it Remus, you could ... they could do so much worse then kill you!"

He nodded as he held her. "I know that. Dumbledore knows that. We all know the risks."

"But I need you and Daniel needs you. Please don't go."

"Don't ask me that, Dora, please don't ask me that. I gave Dumbledore my word, my promise that I would do this. We need to do it, the war is ... it's slowly escalating and if we don't try to stop it before it gets worse then who knows what will happen?"

"It's not fair!"

"And you think it's fair for me? You're home now for a few more months because of our son but what happens after that Tonks? Eh? You're going to go back to work and every time you walk out that door I'm going to wonder if you're ever going to come back!" Remus demanded. "It's not only you that has to worry!"

Tonks shook her head. "That's different! I'm an Auror and that's my job and you knew that when you married me!"

"And you knew that I was a bloody werewolf! Damn it, Nymphadora, this is my job too! I need to go down there, undercover and figure out exactly what Voldemort is planning with them! Greyback is working for him, I know he is!"

"But the stories, Remus ..."

He sighed and kissed her softly. "He's brutal, I know, but baby I have to. You know that."

"But you'll be gone for so long. I'll be so worried."

He smiled. "I love you and I love Daniel and I'll come back to both of you. I'll only be gone two weeks."

She nodded, wiping tears from her eyes. "I'm sorry."

Remus used his thumb to wipe her tears. "What for? Loving me so much?"

She laughed. "Yeah ... I love you. I don't want you to leave in the morning."

He smiled and kissed her. "So let's make it count."

Tonks grinned and slid her hands up his shirt. "Alright."

\*\*\*\*\*

By the time that Friday rolled around, Seamus was beginning to wonder who was more on edge, himself or Lavender. He was counting down the minutes until midnight and he knew by the nervous gestures that Lavender was making that she was as well. He grinned as he watched Lavender open the little note with the bouquet of wild flowers. He had thought that it was cute gift to send her Friday morning, to remind her that her secret admirer was thinking about her. He walked over to her when she headed into the entrance hall and he grinned.

"Hey, look, flowers."

She laughed and nodded, chewing her bottom lip softly. "Isn't he just the sweetest? I can't wait until tonight!"

Seamus grinned. "I'm sure he feels the same way. He obviously really likes you."

Lavender nodded. "I think so. I can't wait."

He smiled and tucked one of the wild flowers behind her ear. "You'll be fine, stop being nervous."

"I'm not nervous," she blew her hair out of her eyes and placed a hand over her jittering stomach. "Okay, I'm terrified."

He laughed. "Don't be. You deserve to be worshipped Lave and this guy obviously knows that." He flicked her nose playfully and grinned. "Talk to you later."

Lavender watched him walk away, his words echoing in her mind. She deserved to be worshipped? Her secret admirer had definitely said that. Her eyes followed Seamus and she shook her head. It was just a weird coincidence. Wasn't it? Seamus didn't care about her like that. They were friends.

*I've been in love with you since third year.*

She remembered falling down the stairs and landing in Seamus' arms as he grinned down at her, holding her close. She remembered his words clearly as if it was yesterday.

*Lave, you have the most beautiful hazel eyes.*

Then his grin had flashed and he'd gone back to his normal flirting self and asked her if she wanted to tango.

She hugged herself close for a moment. Was Seamus in love with her? She closed her eyes, trying to decide if that bothered her or not. She imagined meeting her admirer and kissing him and hugging him and when she looked up into his eyes they were a deep dark blue. His hair, that sandy blondish-brown, was cut short and curled just slightly over his ears. Her eyes flew open instantly ... Seamus.

Lavender had trouble concentrating all day. Now she wasn't only nervous about meeting her secret admirer but Seamus was on her mind. Was he the one doing all of these sweet things? The more she thought about it the more pleased she became until she began to question, what if it wasn't him? Was she falling for her friend? The constant flirt? The one who was always so fiercely protective? The one who was always there for her no matter what? She pushed the thoughts aside as much as she could and tried to focus on her classes but she found herself playing with the one flower that he had tucked behind her ear that morning.

When it was finally quarter to twelve she snuck out of the common

room and slowly made her way towards the destination to meet up with her secret admirer. She was both nervous and excited and at the same time angry. She walked in front of the door three times and a knob appeared there. Lavender forced herself to take three big deep breaths before she pulled it open.

He was sitting on the chesterfield fiddling with the hem of his jumper.

Lavender's heart pounded when she looked over at that familiar sandy hair. "Seamus?"

He turned and managed a small smile. "Hey Lave."

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## Chapter 81: Building Order

**Author's Notes:** ok heres an update now no more! im banning myself from the computer until my midterms are done! lol plz review!

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## Chapter Eighty-One — Building Order

Lavender heard the door close behind her but she just stared at him for the longest time. Then before she could stop it, she felt the anger bubbling up inside of her. "HEY LAVE! HEY LAVE! THAT'S ALL YOU CAN SAY!"

He shrugged. "What do you want me to say?"

"YOU, SEAMUS FINNIGAN, ARE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST PRAT! I THOUGHT THAT WE TRUSTED EACH OTHER! HOW COULD YOU HAVE KEPT THIS FROM ME?"

"HOW COULD I NOT HAVE? GOD LAVENDER! WE'VE BEEN FRIENDS FOREVER AND ... I'm bloody in love with you."

She shook her head no as she looked at him. "You can't be in love with me!"

"Why not?" He asked.

"Because it's not fair! It's not fair that you ... damn it, Seamus!"

She turned on her heel as if to leave and then turned to face him again. "Third year?"

He nodded and took a step towards her. "I've always found you beautiful but that day with Peeves, when you fell down the stairs and right into my arms ... I don't care how corny that sounds; I fell in love with you."

"Well, just fall out again!"

"Do you think I haven't tried? God! It's been killing me to watch you with other guys! But I was afraid that it would ruin our friendship. This year I decided I had to risk it. I couldn't go on living without ever knowing. I love you, Lavender Brown!"

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she stared at him. Then she turned and stormed out of the room. She made it half way down the hall before he grabbed her arm, spinning her around to look at him.

"I'll prove it."

He yanked her up against him and crushed his mouth to hers. She hit his chest as if to protest the kiss but then she melted against him. His soft lips hit hers and her hands fisted in his shirt. She couldn't think and all she could do was feel. No one had ever made her feel so much. His hands moved down to grip her hips tightly and she deepened the kiss, pushing him back against the wall. Their tongues met and he groaned, his hands moving up her sides, brushing the sides of her breasts. She pulled back as the sensations racked her body.

"Seamus ..."



He brought his forehead to hers. "I love you. Please give me a chance. I know that you feel something."

She unclenched her hands from his shirt and wrapped her arms around his waist. "Kiss me."

He grinned and covered her lips with his again just as a loud 'ahem' broke them apart. Argus Filch stood there with Mrs. Norris in his arms.

"Oh my, we are in trouble. It is three hours after curfew."

Seamus shrugged. "Sorry. We'll go back to the common room now."

Filch glared at them. "Detentions both of you. I will be talking to your head of house about sneaking out in the middle of the night like common thieves!"

Seamus rolled his eyes. "Right."

Lavender giggled. "Buh-bye!"

They hurried off in the opposite direction, Seamus' arm still wrapped loosely around her waist and she knew at that moment.

"Seamus?"

"Hmm?" He asked as they walked casually back to the common room.

She took his hand to stop him. "I think I love you too."

He grinned and brought her hand to his lips. "Save it for me and when you know for sure, I'll shout it from the rooftops!"

She laughed. "Prat!"

He grinned and pulled her close and this time when she hugged him he felt happiness rather than sadness because Lavender Brown had a lot to look forward too.

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She had dark red hair, so dark that it was almost the colour of blood. Her eyes were dark as well, black and gleaming with almost a violet colour in them. She was small and only six years old. She had spent the day at the zoo with her best friend Anna and she couldn't wait to go inside and tell her parents all about it. She waved goodbye to Anna's mum, who saw the figure wave from the upstairs window as she stepped inside the house. She closed the front door behind her and watched as they drove away.

"Mum!" She called out, skipping down the hall and into the kitchen. She couldn't wait to tell them of her adventures. She was practically bursting. "Mum, guess what?" When she didn't hear anything she headed upstairs. "Dad, Mum, where are you?" She called out, pushing open the bedroom door.

Her dark eyes went glassy with shock as she stared at the bodies. Blood was everywhere and there was broken glass on the floor. The bed and the curtains were splattered in the deep dark red. The smell of death reeked throughout the room but the little girl didn't notice.

"Mum," she whimpered, crawling forward and sliding in the blood. It was when she leaned over her father and left a bloody handprint on his shirt as his eyes stared blankly up at her that she started to scream.

A cold long fingered hand clamped over her mouth. "Now, now little lamb, no need for that."

She turned to look at him, covered in blood and tears rolling down her cheeks. He was dressed in a long black cloak and his eyes were a gleaming red. His snake-like nose made him look monstrous and she whimpered again.

Voldemort shook his head. "No little lamb. I am Lord Voldemort and I've got big plans for you, my dear, Mira." When he smiled at her she screamed and then she didn't even make a noise when the syringe pressed into her arm and she hit the ground.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry grinned at Ron when they headed back to the locker rooms after a grueling Quidditch practice. The nice little blizzard had left most of the team numb and crabby. Harry couldn't blame them though. He found that he was having some trouble keeping his attention on Quidditch this year, even though he had gained the captaincy. There was just so much going on. He stepped back into the locker room, a towel wrapped around his waist as he wiped water out of his eyes.

"Hey mate, can you stay, I need to talk to you." Harry asked as he Ron picked up his bag.

Ron nodded. "Yeah sure, what's going on?"

Harry slid his boxers on beneath the towel before he slipped it off, using another towel to dry his hair. "I've just been thinking. This year well, we haven't really spent that much time together, but honestly I was wondering ... how do you think I'm doing as Quidditch captain? I feel like I'm not getting anywhere."

Ron grinned. "Mate, you're doing fine! We've only played two games and we won both! Until the snow clears up its pretty much done."

Harry nodded. "Yeah ... it was just bothering me. I'd like for Ginny to be on the team, she's one hell of a chaser."

"Yeah, that would certainly make us better, but there's always next year. Now really, Harry, you didn't keep me back to talk about Quidditch tactics?"

He grinned. "Yeah, I know." He zipped his jeans and pulled a tee shirt over his head and then his jumper. "The Order meeting's tomorrow night."

"Ah," Ron replied as if those words had explained everything. "Look, its good right? I mean Dumbledore's letting us join and ignoring our parents who are hell bent on making us wait until we're seventeen?"

"Yeah, but you'll be seventeen in a few weeks, and Hermione's

already seventeen.”

Ron shrugged. “Good point, mate, but what’s worrying you about it? That we’re joining?”

He shook his head. “No, not so much that we’re joining but that the DA is. I have to pick who I think is ready ... I mean, that’s a big responsibility and some of the people who are ready are way younger than us!”

He nodded. “That is a lot to take. Who are you going to pick?”

“I made a list,” Harry replied, sliding it out of his bag. “Will you tell me what you think?”

“Why? If you picked them then they have to be good right?”

“Because I value your opinion on this, Ron. The one thing you are brilliant at is strategy and because you are I think that you’d be good at figuring out who is ready and who isn’t.”

Ron nodded. “Alright, shoot them off then.”

Harry grinned. “Thanks mate! Alright, so other than you, me, Ginny, Hermione, Neville, Luna, and Draco I’ve chosen Demelza Robbins-”

“Wait, wait, wait — Dee? Shit Harry she’s only fourteen and a third year at that!” Ron exclaimed.

He nodded, dragging his fingers through his hair. “I know. This is so damn hard and I’m trying not to worry about age ... but be honest, her fighting?”

“Brilliant. She’s a great dueler and she’s clever and observant.”

“Exactly why I chose her. Alright, after Dee I picked Dennis Creevey, Jack Sloper, and Victoria Frobisher. Those three are all capable of taking care of themselves and Frobisher’s pretty talented with a wand.”

Ron nodded. "I agree with you there. Denis is strangely surprisingly good at Charms and well Sloper's got a mean stunning hex. He has real power potential."

Harry grinned. "See? This is why I needed you to go over this with me!"

Ron grinned. "No problem, mate, who's next?"

"Colin, Dana Anderson, and Andrea Donald. Colin is a good fighter. The only person he's ever lost against was Gin and I can't fault him for it."

Ron nodded. "Aye and Dana is dangerous mate, have you seen her stinging hex? Ouch! Andrea's competent enough."

"Yeah, I thought so. She's good but she's not perfect, however she's also too good to overlook. Besides, I don't even know if all of these people will agree. I have to submit the list to Dumbledore later. I guess he's going to talk to them before the meeting."

"Makes sense, him being the founder and all. Alright, who's next?"

Harry glanced down at the sheet. "Dean, Seamus, Lavender, Parvati, and Katie Bell. That's all I got for the Gryffindors."

"No questions asked for Dean, Seamus, Lavender, and Parvati and Katie's a bit shy but she's clever. I think she learned most of it from the twins. George was always teasing her and playing pranks."

"Probably for her own safety, yeah. Okay so from Ravenclaw I chose Orla Quirke, Anthony Goldstein, Michael Corner, Dominique St. Claire, Morag McDougall, Padma, Su Li, Lisa Turpin, Eddie Carmichael, and Cho."

Ron nodded. "Orla's pretty good for sure. Goldstein's a little full of himself but the git's got talent when it comes to Charms. Corner's good at defence and Dominique has a bit of a temper which I think only increases her power. McDougall's really brilliant at potions. Padma, Su, and Lisa are really clever when it comes to charms and

defence. Carmichael's a bit of a wimp but he does know how to duel. Cho I'm not seeing so much. I mean, she's talented yeah, but not a whole lot talented, she's more competent."

Harry nodded. "I know that but when she gets angry she has more power. I think it will be good for her. She never really got over Cedric and she wants to help fight. I think being a part of something that gives her an outlet will help her power."

"I get that. Alright, Cho it is then. Who do you got from Hufflepuff?"

"Well, I was thinking Hannah for sure, she's really good at Herbology and any type of non-verbal spells. Laura Madley, Owen Cauldwell, Eleanor Branstone, Kevin Whitby, Rose Zeller, Ernie, Wayne Hopkins, Meghan Jones, Finch-Fletchley, and Susan Bones."

Ron smirked. "I noticed Smith wasn't in that list."

Harry snorted. "Right, that git drives me bloody insane! He's got the talent but he's got to get rid of the arrogance first or he'll get himself killed!"

Ron nodded. "I agree on that. Anyway they all sound good. They all know what their doing and I think that they would be an asset to the Order."

"Good. Okay and from Slytherin I've got Malcolm Baddock and Graham Pritchard, Ted, Blaise, Daphne, Tracy, and Delilah Knight."

Ron glanced at Harry in surprise. "Knight's not in the DA."

"I know. But have you ever seen her duel? I caught her fighting one of Pansy's groupies and she holds her own well, better then well. Besides, considering what happened to her mother I'd say she'll want in." Harry explained. "She's exactly what the Order needs."

"I get that, interesting really, considering Draco loves her. You wouldn't be like trying to throw them together now would you?" Ron asked a grin on his face.

Harry grinned. "No, but that's not a bad idea. She'll find out that he's not his father and when she does I think he'll stand a chance. I like her and I think they'd be good for each other. So what do you think?"

He whistled. "It's quite a bit but I think you got it. That's how many people?"

"Close to fifty. I'd say that if even half of them join that's a huge help!"

Ron nodded. "I'll say. Well, the list looks good, mate, hand it over to Dumbledore and see what he says."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, I guess we will, eh?"

"The meeting should be interesting, I mean, the people who want to join will get to and we'll find out for once what's actually going on." Ron explained. "Instead of just side notes."

"Yeah, I hope it all goes well. If these people join ... the Order will have a little less than a hundred members."

"If only we knew it was enough." Ron replied.

Harry nodded. "If only." He stared down at the paper for a minute and then he sighed. "Well, I better get this to Dumbledore and I guess we better head back before Ginny and Hermione think something happened."

Ron grinned. "Yeah and skin us alive."

Harry laughed. "Or play pranks on us where we see naked Snape."

They both shuddered.

"Okay, we really need to go now." Ron replied, tossing his bag over his shoulder. "Or I'm going to have nightmares."

Harry grinned. "Me too."

They headed out of the locker room, wondering just what the meeting

was going to be like the next evening.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry held Ginny's hand in his as he stepped into the Room of Requirement the next evening for the Order of the Phoenix meeting. It was being held there because of the huge number of students and because the students who were there had yet to officially join. He was pleased to see Angelina, Alicia, and Oliver there as well and he wondered if they would be joining the Order. He took a seat on one of the many cushions that had appeared on the floor and tugged Ginny down into his lap.

"You're so tense," she whispered. "Stop being nervous! It's making me nervous."

He grinned. "I can't help it. I'm nervous."

She smiled and turned to kiss him softly. "I love you."

He sighed. "And I needed that." He kissed her again. "I love you too." He looked over at Ron and Hermione who took seats next to him. The four of them sat there quietly as everyone piled in. Harry couldn't help but smile when he noticed Lavender sitting comfortably on Seamus' lap.

After about ten minutes, everyone seemed to have arrived who was supposed to be there and Dumbledore stood in the middle of the room as people had formed a circle around him.

"Welcome all of you. You all know why you are here tonight. I have spoken to each of you individually as Harry Potter has chosen you as people that he sees as talented and brave enough to fight in this war. This is a huge responsibility. Something that you may think you're ready for but you might not be. This is the Order of the Phoenix, a secret organization started by myself in the 1970s to stop Voldemort. We have rejoined together last year when it came out that Voldemort had returned. Now we need to bind together and to work together as a force to bring him down." Dumbledore replied, his voice rising as he spoke.



“Now those of you who are not yet apart of the Order this is your last chance. Are you willing to join? I understand if you do not want to as it is a huge responsibility and most of you are still very young and not yet adults. If you want to join, say aye.”

The room filled with people's voices. “Aye.”

Dumbledore smiled. “Good.” He snapped his fingers and a scroll appeared out of blue flames. He unraveled it carefully. “This here is a list of Order members. Once you sign, there is no way to get out. It is a legal binding contract. I ask you again to think strongly before joining. It is a secret organization and by signing you are not only taking an oath to help fight but to promise to keep it a secret. The Fidelius Charm is placed on Order headquarters and as none of you will know who the secret keeper is there won't be a problem in giving that away. However, there are other secrets that must be kept. Does everyone here understand?”

There were nods and murmurs of approval.

He nodded. “Good. Now form a line before signing your name. If you do not want to join after all, please come sit on my right.”

No one moved to sit on his right but instead lined up to sign the scroll. When the last person signed and took their seat, Dumbledore rolled up the scroll and it disappeared into blue flames in the air again.

“Now then, let's get started. Kingsley, sit down here.” Dumbledore demanded.

Harry watched as King stepped forward. He looked beyond angry. His body was actually shaking and his eyes were dark in anger.

Dumbledore placed a hand on Kingsley's shoulder. “Now, Voldemort doesn't play games or show kind feelings. Zola Shacklebolt was murdered late last night.” Kingsley began to sob, his face buried in his hands. “She was raped and murdered by a group of Death Eaters. She was twenty-six years old. What had she done to deserve such a terrible fate?”

“Nothing!” Kingsley exclaimed. “They sodding killed her because of me! Because I’m the bloody Head of the Auror Department!”

Dumbledore shook his head no. “Kingsley, it was not your fault. Zola was murdered by Death Eaters and it is because of reasons such as this that we must work together. We want to stop things like this from happening. Zola Shackbolt did not deserve the fate bestowed on her just as no one else who has suffered in this war has. Kingsley here knows the facts but its not going to stop him from grieving.”

Harry’s arms tightened slightly around Ginny and for the first time since she had returned from New York he tried to communicate with her in his mind. *“What’s he trying to prove here? I just don’t get what he’s talking about.”*

He smiled when she responded easily. *“He’s trying to explain to people just how serious the war is and why we’re fighting for it. King lost someone important to him and yes he’s physically grieving but he’s an important aspect not only to the Order but to the Ministry as well.”*

She leaned back against him as he responded mentally. *“Makes sense.”*

*“Pay attention, Harry!”*

He grinned. *“Jeesh, okay, okay, okay.”*

Harry turned his attention back to Dumbledore.

“Zola is not the only tragedy. A muggle family in Wales was brutally slain last night. Their six-year-old-daughter was not found. We believe that she is in Voldemort’s custody.”

Harry spoke up now. “Sir? Why would Voldemort kidnap a six-year-old-girl, especially one that’s a muggle?”

Dumbledore sighed. “I have no idea but there must have been something about her. As of this moment we don’t even know if she’s

alive and until then there's nothing we can do. But everyone here should be made aware of her disappearance. Does anyone here have any questions?"

James nodded. "Yeah I'd like to know why the hell you've got King sitting up there like he's on display! He just lost his sister for Merlin's sake!"

"Is that what you think I'm doing, James?"

"Well, why else is he sitting up there?"

Kingsley looked up now, his eyes red from his grief. "She was all I had, Potter, and Dumbledore knows that. My parents were killed by Voldemort in the first war and I've raised Zola myself. He's using her as an example of the cruelty that Voldemort possesses. I want revenge just as much as I want to protect others. And when I find out who ... I'll kill him with my bare hands."

James placed a comforting hand on Kingsley's shoulder. "Alright, mate."

"Harry, I'd like to ask you to come up here and explain the DA as well as why you chose these particular students to be here tonight." Dumbledore replied.

Ginny slid off of Harry's lap as he climbed up to the front to stand in the middle. "Well um, the DA, which is short for Dumbledore's Army, was an idea that Hermione came up with last year. We weren't learning anything from Umbridge," he blushed when Lily glared at him. "I mean, Umbridge, and Hermione thought it would be a good idea for me to teach defence to the students who were interested. I thought it was dumb at first as I was just a student myself but between Hermione, Ron, and Ginny they convinced me that I was good for the job. Da, Uncle Sirius, and Uncle Remus thought so too. More people ended up joining then I thought and I taught them spells and jinxes and all sorts of things that I myself have used in battle. I was asked to continue the club this year but to also allow entrance to anyone else who was interested. The students I chose to have the chance to enter the Order are ones that are clever and brave and believe in fighting

for a cause. Some of them are younger than me and would normally not even be considered but they're strong and I believe that all of them, given the chance, would prove my decision right."

"Here, here!" Fred and George cheered from the corner making Harry grin.

Dumbledore smiled. "Thank you, Harry, you may sit down again." Once Harry was seated comfortably with Ginny in his lap, Dumbledore turned back to the Order members. "The DA is a special group who I think is very worthy to belong to the Order. I appreciate all of you joining in to fight in this war. Students may leave now." There was a groan of protest but Dumbledore held up his hand. "Most of you are underage and being apart of the Order does not make you privy to all of the information. Mr. Potter, Mr. Weasley, Miss Weasley, Miss Granger, Mr. Longbottom, Mr. Malfoy, and Miss Lovegood may stay as they are too deeply involved and already know most of what will be discussed."

The room emptied quickly leaving Harry, Ginny, Ron, Hermione, Neville, Luna, Draco, Dumbledore, James, Lily, Frank, Alice, Tonks who was holding Daniel, Sirius, Lexy, McGonagall, Kingsley, Moody, Fred, George, Angelina, Katie, Oliver, Alicia, Bill, Fleur, Charlie, Emma, Arthur, and Molly present. The rest of the Order had not attended this meeting.

Dumbledore smiled at them. "Now, Miss Johnson, Miss Bell, Miss Spinnet, and Mr. Wood I'd like to thank you again for showing up here on such short notice. These four young women and man joined a few months ago and have been secretly doing work for me. Miss Bell was recommended as a DA member by Harry to join but he was not aware that she was already a member. The information that will be discussed is privy to only the people in this room. Not everyone in the Order gets the same information. There are spies everywhere and as I strongly believe that there is no spy amongst us at this time, it is still always wise to be careful. Now, one of the main things that need to be discussed tonight is Harry, his parents, and the Longbottoms. James, why don't you start?"

James nodded and took a deep breath. "There was a prophecy made

seventeen years ago ...”

By the time that he was finished explaining how Harry had escaped and the story that he had learnt about the horcruxes through Dumbledore and Harry, the entire room was in awe. Katie Bell spoke up from the back.

“So do you mean to say that V-V-Voldemort broke his soul into seven pieces and hid them around the world?”

Dumbledore nodded. “That’s exactly what he means. Three of them have been destroyed but before Harry can possibly fulfill the prophecy these horcruxes need to be found and destroyed. Until that happens, we find ourselves at a stalemate.”

“However, we hopefully have an idea of where to find another one.” Sirius replied. “Frank?”

Frank stood up and surveyed the room. “Before my family and I were attacked fifteen years ago I stumbled across a reference to the cup of Helga Hufflepuff. I’m a bit of an avid collector of antiques so I looked into it. The cup is supposed to be one of the only remaining artifacts of the founder. I read up on it as well as the powers it was supposed to possess. I was extremely interested in it and I started to look for it. I became a bit obsessed with finding it until finally I gave up. The cup was no where to be found or so I thought. Ice?”

Alice stood up now and took a deep breath. “Frank and I had only been married a few months when we were on a trip to Southern England. We were walking through this meadow area and found an old broken-down house. Feeling adventurous we went inside. The house had writing on the walls and was damaged and vandalized to a great extent but that was when we noticed the cup.”

“It was a sketch drawn onto the wall with a map.” Frank explained. “I thought it was a joke, like a treasure map to the one thing I had been so keen on finding. We decided it would be fun to follow the map just to see where we ended up. It brought us deep into the forest and into a cave. The cup was seated in a crystal coffin behind a magical wall. We almost walked by the wall until Alice felt the heat from it. We

couldn't go near it. Magical forces were pushing us back and almost slicing at us like sharp knives. We left and figured the cup had more powers than anyone thought. We never imagined that Voldemort might have used it to hide a piece of his soul. We did however, tell people what we had found which turned out to be our mistake."

Dumbledore nodded. "I believe he did place a piece a horcrux within the cup. There will be a mission to go to the cave as soon as we look into the magic. We need to gain the cup and destroy the horcrux."

"Who will be going on this mission?" Harry asked.

"Not you," James replied. "So don't even ask. It's not fully decided yet but a team will be put together."

Harry was about to protest when the door to the Room of Requirement opened up and Snape stepped in.

"Ah, Severus, I hope you have useful information for us."

Snape glanced around at all of the students. "Dumbledore, what's going on?"

"Severus, these are some of the new Order members that have been recruited."

Snape sneered at this. "Children?"

"We're not children." Harry replied angrily. "And it's our choice."

Snape shrugged. "Fine. It was indeed Death Eaters that attacked Zola Shacklebolt."

Kingsley's eyes whipped over to Snape's face. "Who?"

"I don't know the exact details but Malfoy and his cronies were bragging about it. I'd say at least five of them enjoyed the rape."

Kingsley's knuckles whitened as his fists clenched tightly at his sides. The gold hoop in his ear glistened against his dark head. "I'll kill him."

“King,” James murmured. “Now isn’t the time. He’ll pay. They’ll pay for what they’ve done to those we love.”

Dumbledore nodded at them. “Yes, they will. Can you tell us anything else, Severus?”

Snape nodded. “Yeah, I found out why Bray was murdered.”

“That journalist who wrote about me?” Ginny asked. She was trembling slightly and was pleased that Harry’s arms were wrapped tightly around her.

“Yes. The Dark Lord knows about the Chamber of Secrets. He was not pleased with Lucius when he found out what he had done. He does not remember any of it but he seems to be planning something involving Miss Weasley. Mentioned something about them sharing a special bond. From what I understood, Bray’s murder was because of what she wrote about Miss Weasley. Her powers alone seem to be of great interest.” Snape replied.

Bill glared at him. “Her powers? How does he know what she’s capable of? We’ve kept it all under wraps to a great extent!”

Snape shrugged. “That I do not know. He doesn’t know the details but he knows that Miss Weasley is the seventh child and the first daughter to be born in seven generations. The Dark Lord has a great appreciation for the number seven. I’d say he just assumes she’s powerful.”

Charlie shook his head. “You find out what the hell he wants with her! I’ll kill him myself if even tries to touch her again!”

“Charlie!” Ginny murmured. “Stop it!”

Dumbledore nodded. “It’s not helping anything, but it’s definitely information worth knowing.”

Harry’s arms stayed wrapped around Ginny when he spoke. “He wants her for something, but he’s not going to get her.”

Dumbledore shook his head. "No, he won't. We'll try to figure out more about what he's looking for, but for now the last thing we need to discuss is recruiting more members. Miss Weasley, I believe that you will be of help there."

Ginny glanced up at Dumbledore in surprise. "How sir?"

"Miss Stanton and Miss Chung have proved very helpful but the more people we can gather from around the world to help in this war will be better."

Emma nodded. "Duna would be a great help. He's extremely powerful in his village and he would know of others who would be willing to help."

"And Leila too. Emma, what about Jed?"

Emma laughed. "Well, he's crazy but he could help as well."

Dumbledore smiled. "I'd like both of you to write to them and to ask them for assistance not only from themselves but anyone else who is willing to help. Members from around the world would increase our assets greatly."

Emma nodded. "Of course. Ginevra and I will both write, they'll be bombarded."

Ginny smiled. "Yes."

Dumbledore nodded. "Good. Meeting adjourned."

Ginny snuggled back against Harry as people began to leave before she turned to him. "Can we go somewhere quiet?"

He nodded. "My trunk?"

She smiled and stood up, taking his hand in hers. They made their way through the crowd, stopping to talk and say goodbye to people along the way so it took them over half an hour to get up to Harry's



dorm and into his trunk. Harry locked the lid before they went into the bedroom.

Harry sat down on the bed and opened his arms. "Come here, baby."

Ginny melted into them, her arms wrapped tightly around him as her face pressed against his heart. "I'm okay."

He ran his fingers through her hair and kissed the top of her head. "No, but you will be. No one will let anything happen to you."

She nodded, moving to snuggle her closer. "I never expected that ... I mean, I know we questioned the possibility when Bray was murdered but ... what could he possibly want with me?"

"It doesn't matter. He's not going to get to you." Harry murmured. "I'd die first."

She looked up at him then, her dark brown eyes meeting his. "No, I have lots of people to protect me if I can't protect myself."

He smiled. "You'd kick his arse!"

She laughed and kissed him. His hands slid down to her waist as he fell back on the bed, her small curvaceous body sliding over his as she deepened the kiss. He let out a small moan as she moved down over his jaw and down his neck, sucking gently on his Adam's apple.

"Mmm, I need this, I need you." She murmured. "I just want to touch and feel."

He could only nod as she unbuttoned his shirt, pushing it open so that her mouth could move over bare skin as she yanked at the tie so that it slipped off. Her lips brushed over the small line of dark hair on his stomach and she grinned when he trembled. She planted small kisses up his body and back to his mouth.

Harry slid his hands up her back. He was more than happy to let her set the pace. She was in a needy mood that he didn't quite understand but as long as she never stopped touching him he figured

that he could survive. Her small hands slid along his chest as her tongue met his in a slow dance that had his juices stirring. He had tried to avoid being alone like this with her for too long as she was driving him crazy but at the same time he was more than happy to feel her hands moving over his skin.

He broke the kiss, moving over her jaw line and around to her ear. He sucked gently on the lobe. "Time to go dragon hunting."

She laughed when his lips slid down her neck and he rolled her over so that she was beneath him. She arched against him as he unbuttoned her blouse and moved lower. He slipped his hands up her leg, grinning when his hand found the tattoo.

"Are you wearing some of that wicked underwear beneath your uniform again?" He asked in a half-moan.

She laughed. "I might be."

He made a sound in his throat like a growl as he traced the outline of the dragon with his finger. "Mmm, look what I found." She sighed as his hands slid over her stomach, unbuttoning the last few buttons so that he could spread her blouse open. This time her bra was white but it was still lacey and sexy. He kissed his way up her stomach, grinning at her when she wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled his mouth back to hers.

She pushed him back down on the bed so that she was on top of him. Her small hands moving down his chest to stroke and torture. She ran her finger along the line of skin above his trousers and he murmured her name, burying his face in her neck.

"Merlin, you're killing me!" He murmured as she kissed her way back down his chest.

She ran her finger just under his belly button and his breath hitched. Her long hair slid across his abdomen as she nibbled on his stomach and back up to his lips. Harry groaned against her mouth, his fingers in her hair to pull her closer. She slid her hands over his shoulders and beneath his shirt as she planted small kisses on his neck.

“Ginny,” he gasped, trying to pull her back up to his lips as her tongue moved along his collarbone.

“Nuh-uh,” she murmured.

He sighed as she nibbled and her soft hands roamed over his back. She was driving him crazy and he wasn’t sure how much longer he could go having her torture him this way. He wanted to make love to her. His hands fluttered over her stomach and she sighed, pulling his lips to hers.

Neither one of them were sure who had made the first move. But as soon as their lips had met the jolt went through them. Power radiated from both of them and Harry gasped for air when his body tensed with the sensations of her feelings and her magic flowing through him. His eyes darkened to an intense green as he stared into her chocolate brown ones.

“Ginny,” he murmured.

She clasped her hand in his and the magic ripped through him. It wasn’t painful but it was intense and more powerful than it had ever been. He could feel everything that she was feeling and everything he was feeling at the same time. He looked down at her, both of them had their shirts unbuttoned and their hair messed. He leaned down and captured her mouth with his again. The power jolted and both of them murmured each other’s names as the magic danced between them in an orgasmic explosion of power as they kissed softly.

With power still licking through her system, Ginny snuggled close to Harry, her head resting over his heart. Both of them were visibly relaxed. “I love you.”

He ran his fingers through her hair. “I love you too. Gin ... what was that?”

She traced the outline of his heart over his chest. “We shared magic.”

“Unintentionally. It was like ... our magic took over.”

"It did. I could feel your power and your arousal and your frustration. Then suddenly it felt like I was glowing and my power was building. I could see the power practically radiating from us."

He nodded. "It was like, while we fought for control, our magic let loose. Does that make sense?"

"Yeah ... I know I make it hard for you."

"Hmm?" He asked, his hand playing with her hair.

Ginny sighed. "I make it hard for you. I know that. I tease and torture you in ... well, I don't ever intentionally set out to do it ... but I know you've been avoiding being alone with me for a while."

He grinned. "I want you, Ginny. We've been dating now for almost two years. I know we were young and technically I guess we're still young but ... I want to make love with you. I dream about it at night and I wake up aching. You're the only one I want. And yes, damn it, you do drive me crazy! But at the same time I know that you're not ready yet and the moment that you are you'll tell me. I can wait. I just hope the wait's not too long."

She smiled against his chest. "Harry?"

"Hmm?"

"What if I told you that I wanted to wait until we got married? That I want to be pure on our wedding night?"

He groaned. "I could wait."

She grinned. "Could you? I think it would be romantic."

Harry closed his eyes for a moment. "Gin, let's get married tomorrow."

She laughed. "You would really wait that long if I asked you to?"

He turned to smile at her. "Gin, for you, I'd wait forever."

She smiled and kissed him softly, snuggling close. "I love you Harry and I won't make you wait forever."

He grinned. "Good to know."

She grinned. "Can we stay here tonight? Just like this."

He flicked his hands and the blankets came up to wrap themselves around them as Ginny snuggled closer. He kissed the top of her head. "As long as you want."

Within minutes they had both drifted off to sleep.

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## **Chapter 82: Just Another Couple of Weeks**

**Author's Notes:** thanks to kate!  
my longest chapter yet!  
plz review!

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## **Chapter Eighty-Two — Just Another Couple of Weeks**

James closed the bedroom door behind him that evening as he rubbed a hand over his aching head. The meeting had been a lot more intense than he had planned on. Those kids all joining the Order and ... he had refused to allow Harry in but when Dumbledore had approached him with his plan, he knew that it was the right thing to do. Especially now that everyone knew about the horcruxes. He wasn't too sure on Snape's role still as he seemed to be kept in the dark about the horcruxes yet at the same time he was playing a very vital and very dangerous role. So maybe it was best if he didn't know everything. He rubbed his head again before he stripped down and climbed into the bed.

Lily came out of the bathroom in her nightgown and crawled into bed next to him. She cuddled close and placed her hand over his head. "It hurts?"

He nodded. "A bit. Just a headache. It was intense in there."

She nodded. "There's a lot going on right now. All of those kids, Jamie."

"I know, Lil, they're so young but at the same time we know that we need them here in this war. It's a scary thought. And King's sister ... man, Zola was his life."

"I didn't realize that you were close with Kingsley."

James shrugged. "I'm not really, I mean, he's Head of the Auror Department which is amazing considering he's younger than me by five years. But Zola ... his parents were killed and he's raised her since she was a kid. She was beautiful and she was great. She was a healer. She wanted to help people. They killed her just because she ... it's not fair."

"It's never fair! Was it fair that your parents were murdered or that my parents were murdered? Life sucks, James. We both know it. But we also know all of the wonders that it can offer. Like life."

He placed a hand over her stomach. "I know."

"I'm worried about that little girl. A family in Wales is brutally slain, but why kidnap the child?" Lily asked. "Especially by doing it himself? Was there something special about her?"

James shrugged. "I don't know. Her name is Mira White and she's a muggle. I can't think of any reason why he would ..." He trailed off suddenly, his blood going cold. "He's not that fucking sick is he?"

Lily's eyes widened as she realized where her husband's thoughts had gone. "Oh Merlin, I hope not! She was only six years old! I don't think that's it, James. Why her? There are so many other girls in the world. No, there's something special about her. He found out what it

was and now he's using it, using her to his advantage."

"We have to find the girl. Who knows what kind of trauma she experienced? The blood and gore in that house ... it was sickening. Ian and I went through it and we felt physically ill. Both of us got sick outside of the house and this was after the muggles had already taken a look through it. It was beyond anything I've seen in a while. You could see her bloody handprints on her parents ... she must have crawled through the blood towards them. Lil, you think it was bad before, he's only gotten more violent and more angry. Some of the murders ... Bray for example and that other reporter Greg Henderson ... it was brutal. Ian and I are the main guys on these murders. We've been working with the police almost as much because of the crossover between the muggle and the magical community." James explained.

Lily nodded. "It's not just him, though. Voldemort isn't doing all of this by himself. You can only control people so far. The men and women that are doing this ... his Death Eaters ... they're just as sick if not worse."

"I know. We'll have to see what happened." He sighed. "It's what Snape said that worries me the most."

Lily nodded. "The number seven."

"Yeah," James replied. "That number obviously has some meaning to him, more than just the symbol of it being powerful. He used it as a goal in how many horcruxes he wanted and now he's using it for Merlin knows what else. The number seven leads him to Ginny as well. Harry's eyes darkened quite intensely at those words, he looked beyond angry and beyond scared. He was holding her pretty damn close when Snape made that announcement."

"He's not going to let anything happen to her. He loves her more than anything and the idea that the one person who has been slowing ruining his life wants the one person that he loves most scares him." Lily replied.

James nodded. "Ginny is more than important to him. He needs her

more than anything and I'm not sure exactly if he's realized it yet. Both of them are so much older than they actually are. I've tried to keep him grounded and to keep him innocent but after that first year ... the Philosopher's Stone and then rescuing Ginny from the Chamber of Secrets and then Wormtail and then the tournament and then the ministry. He's been forced to grow up no matter how much I don't want to see it. He's ages older than his sixteen years."

"As is Ginny. She has so much power."

"More than ... the things that she can do and the things that Harry can do, you just know that together they would be more unstoppable than ever. Voldemort was part of her for almost a year and that's never really left her. It plays a role in her strength as well. At least I think so. If Voldemort finds out about her power now ... what could he possibly want from her other than the seven thing. What does even the seventh child and the first daughter in seven generations have anything to do with it? Why does he find that significant enough to want to get a hold of her? There's more there Lily. There's more there than we know and I think Snape better find out fast what that is."

Lily nodded. "I agree completely. He has something planned, James, and Ginny is a part of it. His goal in the beginning had a lot to do with making the wizarding community pureblood but now ... that mission ended long ago with the prophecy made about his downfall. Now we have no idea what his goal is. He could be planning anything. He's killing and Death Eaters are killing people that we wouldn't even consider. They're random and that's a big part of the problem. But the murder of Bray ... he's planning something with Ginny in mind, there was no reason for Bray to die otherwise."

"I'm wondering how much he knows about the diary and the chamber. From what I gathered from Harry and Ginny that day in Dumbledore's office, Ginny wrote everything in that diary. Her thoughts, her dreams, her fears, her memories and he had control over that and then over her to a huge extent. But if the diary was a horcrux then it's destroyed and Dumbledore doesn't believe that he knows when one of them is destroyed. But he must know about the diary. Lucius Malfoy had to have said something along the way." James replied, almost to himself. "The man makes a big mistake like that; yeah he's not going to want



to admit it, but what if Voldemort asks him where he's put it? He's going to have to confess if he wants to live. Malfoy's an ass but he's valuable to Voldemort. He's not going to kill him but he definitely needs to know everything. We have to find out what's going on in that sense, Lily, and we need to know quickly."

Lily closed her eyes. "We really do need to know and I'm sure we'll find out soon, but until then, Ginny will be kept safe."

James nodded. "I hope so. The other thing is these horcruxes ... we have to stop them and to think that we might know where another one is ... it's slowly coming together even if it feels like we're not getting anywhere."

"You're going to go, aren't you?"

"Yeah. Dumbledore wants Sirius, Frank, and I to go. Sirius and I have already destroyed one each and since Frank knows where it is ... I don't know. We're not even sure if that's where the horcrux actually is. But we have to look." James replied. "You know that Dumbledore needs you here, right? And hell, I don't want you going Lily, not when you're carrying our child."

She nodded. "I know. I won't risk the baby, James. It's happening all over again. It scares me. It scares me to think that this war is still going on so strong and that we might not be able to stop it."

"We will stop it. Harry will ultimately stop it and I think that scares me more than anything to know that he will fulfill this prophecy. There are so many things that we need to ... he's not trained enough not yet. I've been training him and keeping him as ready as I can be. Lily, he's powerful and we both know it, but will it be enough in the end?"

Lily sighed and rested her head over her husband's heart. "I don't know. It has to be. It won't be time, not yet. He's not ready yet and he'll know when he's ready. He's had a good life, James, you've raised him to be a wonderful young man and I know that Remus and Sirius played a strong role in that but he has suffered too. He's our baby."

James sighed. "Lil if this is about Vernon and Petunia I didn't know what was going on there and if I had —"

"I'm not blaming you, James!" Lily replied. "If you had known you would have put a stop to it. I know it. But I can't just put it behind me. I just can't! She's my sister and ... I need to speak with her. I need to look her in the eye and talk with her and yell and ... this war it's ... I have to do it."

James nodded and kissed the top of her head. "I know. I knew that you were going to have to do it sometime. I was hoping it would be later. She's not worth it, Lily."

"It seems like she's hated me my entire life. I don't remember ever getting along with her the way that I wanted to." Lily murmured. "But no matter how much she hated me, why couldn't she have protected my child? Was that too much to ask?"

"Shh," James murmured, holding her close as he kissed her cheek. "It wasn't, honey, but she couldn't do it. She couldn't get past her anger and that's sad. But I think that she's more than sorry. That day at the Grangers, she went out of her way to see how Harry was. Harry was angry naturally and upset that they were there and that they were trying to pretend that it had never happened but she was trying. Maybe that means something."

She nodded. "Maybe. She's the only family that I have left, Jamie."

He kissed her softly. "I know baby. When do you want to go?"

"As soon as possible. I might not be able to go with you on this mission but just because I'm pregnant doesn't mean that you're going to be stopping me from fighting. But before I can fight this war I have to fight the war within myself first and that starts with Petunia." Lily explained.

He nodded. "I'll go with you."

She shook her head no and turned to look into his eyes. "No, I need to do this myself, James. You know that."

He nodded. "I know." He tilted her chin towards him so that he could kiss her softly. "Promise me that you'll be careful?"

She smiled. "Only if you can do the same."

"I promise."

"I promise too." She murmured, snuggling close in his arms. "Will you just hold me?"

He grinned. "Always."

She stayed close in his arms and soon she drifted off to sleep but James' eyes stayed open. He knew that dark times lied ahead and he wasn't sure how he felt about it. He placed a hand over his wife's stomach and a small smile formed on his face at the thought of life growing there. The war was longwinded and in another sense only just beginning. They had a long way to go.

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Remus rolled over onto his back and groaned inwardly at the pain it caused in his muscles. He had been living down in the sewers and the cave systems for one week now. He missed his warm bed and he missed his wife and his son. He could hear voices coming from nearby and he stood up to head over there. He had been talking and talking for days now but he wasn't getting anywhere. His eyes fell on the pretty brunette in her early twenties.

Her name was Allison Sanders and she had only been bitten five years ago. Greyback had recruited her into his army early and she was slowly building up a bloodthirsty mindset. She was following the goals that Greyback set out for his so-called family. Her eyes met his and she gave him a sweet smile.

"Remus, sleep alright?"

"I've had better. I don't know why you all insist on not having a comfy bed."

A man stepped out of the corner; his name was Damien Ross and he chuckled. "Well, we're half-breeds or misfits; we don't deserve the same comforts."

Remus shrugged. "So you say. I've had my share of problems I admit, but trust me, we can live normal lives."

Roger Addison grinned. "Maybe we can. But here we get our choice of meat and can be allowed to roam free."

Diana Borderland smiled seductively as she walked her hand up Remus' chest. "And we can shag like rabbits any time we want, with as many as we want. You should join in on the festivities, Remus."

"It's not my kind of thing. Greyback has nothing to offer you!" Remus exclaimed. "Living down here in filth and rot and ... not being up in the world."

Sanders smiled. "We have everything we could want. We've been promised more than freedom if we follow the Dark Lord."

"The Dark Lord is not going to succeed and you're going to end up burned." Remus replied. "I just wish that you would take notice of that."

Addison shrugged. "It's a tough world, Lupin; we've got to grab at strings while we can."

There were four small children that made their way forwards. The twins Ryan and Mario nodded up at Remus. A ten-year-old-boy Jason just watched him. Remus knew that these kids trusted him. His eyes fell on the pretty little girl and they darkened as he turned to the adults around him, desperately hoping that they would get some rationality.

"What about the children?" Remus asked. "Have you thought about that? Why should they be forced to live and grow up under here just because one of you got loose and attacked them? Why do you get to be the ones choosing to ruin their lives?"

Ross' eyes glinted. "I was a child when I was bitten! Who was there to save me?"

"So was I, but I got through it! I'm a werewolf and I'm not proud of it, but I do what I can to make sure that I don't attack people, that I'm safe. I have a family and friends and I'm a wizard. What do you have down here? Filth, rot, muck? It's a hell down here and Greyback is the goddamn devil himself leading you all into hell when Voldemort snaps his fingers! I can help you live normal lives! There are people willing to help! Jobs may be hard to find but they're not impossible! If we don't fight for our rights then how do we expect to earn them?"

"What do you think we're doing here if not fighting for our rights?" Ross demanded.

Borderland nodded, her eyes glinting dangerously. "We feed when we want; we have sex when we want; we are in control here."

"That's not fighting for your rights; that's fighting a war that will only continue to make us all look like viscous animals!" Remus exclaimed. "It's because of people like you that we're shunned to the degree that we are! Dumbledore is willing to help! You can fight in this mission from the good side; the side that will make you look like heroes rather than enemies; the side that will help show the world that we're men and women just like they are and not the monsters that the world makes us out to be; the side that will allow these children to grow up having a normal life."

He reached down to pick up the little girl. She was only six and her hair and clothes were dirty, but he knew that no matter how young and innocent she was, that when the full moon struck she was dangerous. Just the same as the three young boys were who were trapped down there as well.

"I don't want to be bad." She told him. "I want to go home to my mummy."

Remus nodded and kissed her hair. "I know, Lyra. I want you to as well."

A loud clapping noise made them turn around as Lyra snuggled into Remus' shoulder, her face buried in his neck. Fenrir Greyback stood at the top of the staircase. "That was touching, Lupin, very touching indeed. I'm a monster to you, am I? The bane of your existence? Was it not me that made you what you are? You should be on your hands and knees thanking me. I gave you life. And here you are trying to take away my devoted friends and family? The Dark Lord is the one who will help us. Not Dumbledore. The man is a fool. And you all know what happens when someone crosses me? Do you not?"

There was a murmured response before Lyra was pulled out of Remus' arms.

"Now let's remind you, Lupin, of what you are and how you deserve to be treated." Greyback replied, an evil smile on his face. "Go ahead."

Remus didn't even have time to react as Ross and Addison grabbed him and dragged him over to the wall. Lyra was crying as they stripped him down, chaining him in place. "Can't you take the kids out of here, Greyback? They hardly need to witness this."

Greyback grinned and came down the stairs to stand in front of him. "Remus, they need to learn, don't they?"

Remus didn't get a chance to respond as the whip hit him. He didn't make a sound until Greyback turned his wand on him and sent the Cruciatus Curse his way. He screamed as his body began to convulse under the heat and the pain. In the back of his mind he could hear the children screaming with him but he couldn't focus. The curse lifted and Greyback was grinning at him.

"I hope that taught you a lesson, Lupin, because now it's time to teach my family one."

Remus glanced at his sire in alarm. "What do you mean?"

Greyback grinned. "The taste of blood."

Remus gulped as Borderland and Sanders ran forward and sank their teeth into him. He screamed as they tore at the flesh in his sides and in his arms. Their nails raked over his chest and back, leaving scratches and gashes deep and painful. He roared in pain and fought the pleasure of it; the pleasure that the wolf inside of him got out of the blood and the pain. He screamed again as Diana's eyes met his, her mouth dripping in his blood.

"I've got my family, Remus, but where's yours?"

Greyback grinned. "Dumbledore can't help you now." He pointed his wand at him again. "Crucio!"

The pain zipped through him as the two women moved back and he closed his eyes, blacking out into the deep abyss.

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Tonks opened the front door of the cottage with Daniel in her arms. She smiled at the sight of Lily and Lexy. "Hey, what are you two doing here?"

Lexy reached forward to pull her close for a hug. "We came to see how you were doing."

They stepped inside and closed the door before making their way into the kitchen and sitting around the table. Tonks handed Daniel to Lily as she made tea.

"I'm alright. I'm worried; I'm not going to lie. I know that he's gone under, no communication in any way but it's so ... how do I know that he's alright?"

Lily nodded. "Because you know. You would know in your heart if something happened. He's alive Tonks and he's on a mission for the Order. If he can recruit even a few men and women like himself to join our side rather than Voldemort's it will help immensely."

"I just wish that I was there! I hate sitting here helplessly! I became an Auror for a reason! And just being here, knowing that he's out there

risking his life ... I should be there by his side!" Tonks exclaimed.

"I know, Tonks. I feel the same way. So does Lily. The men are pushing us aside because we're pregnant and they don't want us to get hurt." Lexy replied. "I understand and accept that but at the same time neither one of us is helpless and we have to be able to do something."

"Like what, though?" Lily asked. "Other than fighting what else can we do?"

Lexy shrugged. "We can help in the research and we can fight we just have to fight our own way. Not risking our babies is important but we're part of this war too. Tonks, you know that you can't go with Remus. It has nothing to do with the fact that you're not capable. But he's the werewolf; he's the one who has a connection with these people and if both of you were gone, then who would take care of this little guy?"

Tonks sighed. "I know. I know! I just ... I'm so worried. It's only been a week but ... there's still one more week before he comes back."

Lily reached over to run her hand over Tonks' back. "He'll come home. He's stubborn and there's no way that he's going to give up on the family he just got."

Lexy nodded. "Definitely, there's no way."

Tonks sniffed as she wiped tears from her eyes. "I hope so."

"Do you think he'll be able to convince any of them?" Lexy asked. "From what I understand through Sirius, this Greyback character is the one who sired Remus? He's pure evil and he likes the taste of flesh and blood even when he's in human form. Merlin only knows what kind of army he could be building up."

Lily nodded. "He's a very dangerous man. Having him on the side of Voldemort only adds more fuel to the fire. Remus needs to do this Tonks and in the end even if it doesn't get anywhere, at least he tried."



"I know you're right. I'm just so worried about him. I want him here. I want him lying next to me at night and waking me up in the morning with Daniel in his arms. I know I'm being selfish when there's a war going on and people are dying but he's my husband."

"You're not being selfish." Lexy replied. "It's a normal reaction. Everything will be okay. He'll be back soon."

Tonks nodded as she scooped Daniel up from Lily's arms. "I'm going to go lay him down for his nap. I'll be right back."

Lily watched her go upstairs. "She's more than nervous about this. You can see the worry in her eyes. I think it's harder for her because she is an Auror and now she can't do anything."

Lexy nodded. "I think so, too."

Lily sighed. "For now, let's just keep her as comfortable as possible. The week will hopefully go by quickly."

"From your lips to God's ears." Lexy replied as her eyes drifted towards the stairs. The only thing she knew was that the week was not going to be fast for Tonks.

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Remus woke up, groaning and coughing up blood a bit. He was lying in a forest, his clothes strewn about around him. He made an effort to sit up and the pain in his ribs was excruciating and he yelped, falling back down. His breathing was heavy as he forced himself to his feet. He leaned back against a tree, breathing hard as his eyes traveled over his body. He was still naked and dried blood mixed with fresh blood as it dripped down his body. His ribs and his sides were torn open and he could feel his legs shaking from the weakness. His head was pounding.

"Remus?" A small voice murmured and his eyes flipped open. Lyra was standing in between the three boys who had been in the cave; Ryan, Jason, and Mario.

“Hey, what are you four doing here?” He asked, hating the weak sound of his voice.

Jason was the oldest at ten and he stepped forward with Remus’ pants in his hands. “We’re going to get you to St. Mungo’s. Greyback doesn’t know we’re here.”

Ryan nodded. He was nine and his twin brother Mario stood next to him silently. “You’re the only one who ever cared about us. We want to help you.”

Remus nodded. “T-thanks.”

Ryan and Mario held onto him as Jason helped him into his pants. The blood continued to drip down his body. Lyra watched them silently, her eyes curious and afraid.

Remus managed her a small smile, even though he felt like he was going to pass out any minute. “It’s alright, Lyra. I won’t let anyone hurt you guys again, alright?”

The four of them nodded as Jason gripped him firmly around the waist.

“How do you plan to get me there?” He asked, his voice weak. “I can’t walk any further.”

Ryan nodded. “He’s right, Jay.”

Jason nodded. “I’ll get help.”

Remus was about to say yes when he remembered the mirror. “Wait, there’s ... there’s a mirror in my pocket. Get it.”

Mario reached into his pocket and pulled out the mirror. “Why a mirror?”

Remus shook his head. “Say, say the name Tonks into it and when her face appears you, you tell her where we are.”

Mario nodded. He held the mirror to his mouth. "Tonks."

It was only a few seconds before her face appeared. "Wotcher, who are you?"

"I'm Mario. Listen, we've got Remus here with us but he needs help bad. We're in a forest just outside of Cornwall. Come quickly."

He put the mirror back in Remus' pocket. "She's coming."

Remus could only nod. His entire body was on fire, aching and swelling and he knew that he had lost a lot of blood. He remembered how it had felt when the teeth had ripped into his flesh. He heard the sound of someone apparating and he turned, smiling to see his wife approaching. Her eyes glanced over the kids and then they widened in shock when they fell upon him.

"Remus," she murmured.

"Nymphadora. I need ... I need a healer."

She nodded and kissed him. "I know, baby."

"The kids ... they ... bring them to headquarters ... keep them safe ... get Dumbledore."

"I will." She reached down for his shirt and turned it into a portkey before handing it to the kids. "Take this. It will bring you to a safe place."

The four of them nodded and she waited until they disappeared before she grabbed her emergency Auror portkey from her pocket and disappeared straight to St. Mungo's with it. Remus fell against her as they landed and she dragged him over to the desk, tears running down her cheeks.

"I need a healer now."

The woman at the desk nodded and immediately called for a Healer

Reynolds. Before Tonks could blink Remus was rushed out of the waiting room.

“I’m sorry, Miss, but you’ll have to wait here.”

“He’s my husband!” She exclaimed.

“It doesn’t matter! He’s being treated. You’ll have to wait out here just a minute until they have him settled.”

Tears rolled down Tonks’ cheeks as she nodded. “Alright.”

She grabbed some parchment from the desk and wrote a quick note to Dumbledore explaining what happened and where she sent the children. She used an owl to send it and hoped that it didn’t take too long to reach Dumbledore. She had just finished when a blonde woman came out.

“Mrs. Lupin? You can go in now.”

Tonks followed her into the room and gasped when she saw him. Healer Reynolds had him in bed now and he was pumping potions in him as he worked at the gashes in his sides. She sat down next to him and took his hand.

“I’d prefer you stayed outside until I’m finished healing him, Mrs. Lupin.” Tonks glared at him, her eyes flashing dangerously and he sighed. “That’s what I was afraid of.” He continued to examine the wounds. “Whitney, he’s got what looks like deep gashes from nails possibly running along his back and chest. They’re deep and will need to be healed properly to prevent scarring. His ribs seem to be fine but the flesh seems to be ... bite marks.”

Tonks’ eyes moved to her husband’s side instantly. She could see the torn flesh and her stomach revolted at the sight so she turned away. She brought his hand to her lips. “Oh, baby, what did they do to you?”

Healer Reynolds worked on him for three hours before he allowed Whitney to give him something for the pain.

"Mrs. Lupin, he's going to be fine. He'll have a few scars mind you, but he'll be alright. We're going to have to re-grow some of his skin cells. We've given him a potion for that as well as one to restore his blood. He'll probably be awake soon. When he does, make him drink this, it's for the pain." Healer Reynolds replied.

Tonks nodded. "I will, thank you."

He had barely left the room when Remus' eyes had fluttered open.

"Oh, baby!" Tonks murmured, bringing his hand to her lips.

"Nymphadora?" He murmured.

"I'm right here, honey."

"Where are the kids?"

"I sent them to headquarters and Dumbledore's gone to meet them. They're safe."

He nodded and swallowed. "Can I, can I have some water?"

She reached over for the small cup and straw and let him sip. "What happened?"

He shook his head. "They won't come ... bloodthirsty all of them. Lyra, Mario, Jason, and Ryan ... only children and he wanted to show them horrible things. They saved my life. They've escaped from him but ... they like it there with Greyback. Only the children came to help. They need normal lives, Tonks."

She nodded. "I know. We'll give them normal lives. We'll find decent homes for them."

He smiled and clasped her hand tightly. "I knew you'd understand. Where's Daniel?"

"He's with Lexy and Lily. They came over to talk to me about not

worrying so much about you. Too late for that.”

Remus chuckled and then coughed. “Yeah.”

“Here, it’s a pain potion. Take it.”

He drank it and then smiled at her. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” She murmured, but he didn’t hear her because he had drifted off to sleep.

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By the time that the Hogsmeade trip finally came about on the last day of March, Remus was up and about and home. Harry was having constant correspondence with him as much as he could because the news had really alarmed him when he had found out that he was injured. He also liked using the mirror as a way to talk to Daniel. He didn’t want his godson to forget him. Daniel just stared at him mostly and moved his arms and legs, sometimes he gurgled. But Harry was happy enough.

He also spent a lot of time talking to Tonks. She said Remus was fine, a few scars that would heal in time. James and Sirius had been worried as well and as soon as news had come that Remus was in the hospital he had been bombarded by the marauders. James and Sirius said he was doing alright though and the four children that had saved him were being kept safe.

Ryan and Mario were actually living with Ian MacGregor and his wife Maria. They had taken them in quickly and with no questions asked. The twins were to be kept safe and they were prepared for when the full moon came. Maria was brewing the Wolfsbane potion for them. They already had three boys around that age who were excited at the prospect of guests. Ian and Maria were looking at adoption after a bit of time. They wanted to make sure the boys were happy with them first; after all they were complete strangers.

Jason had moved in with Hestia Jones. She was actually his aunt and was so happy to see him again. His mother had deserted him at the

first signs of his being a werewolf, but Hestia was more than happy to take him in. He was family and that was the only thing that mattered to her. She set about for adoption immediately.

Lyra was a bit difficult. She clung to Remus desperately all of the time. She trusted next to no one and he wasn't sure what to do. Harry suggested possibly adopting her since her parents didn't want her. Tonks thought that it was a good idea but Remus wasn't sure. He didn't want to thrust two werewolves on his wife. Harry hoped that they decided to adopt her because Remus adored her almost as much as she did him. She was only six and had only been bitten a year ago. She needed a happy stable home even more than the boys did.

He grinned to himself as he headed down to breakfast that morning. He was just about to step into the entrance hall when he felt his mirror heat up in his pocket. He stepped back to stay in the small hallway and he pulled it out. "Hey Uncle Moony."

Remus smiled. "We found a home for Lyra."

Harry grinned. "Where?"

"Yours. James and Lily have taken her in."

Harry's eyes widened in surprise. "Wasn't expecting that. Why not you?"

Remus sighed. "Tonks shouldn't have to deal with trying to control two werewolves. Besides, James has been around me since I was a kid, he knows how to handle it and so does Lily."

Harry nodded. "Makes sense. So are they adopting her?"

"I'll assume that's Moony and he beat us to the punch." James replied from behind him.

Harry turned. "Yeah. Da's here, talk to you later." He murmured into the mirror. "You and Mum are adopting Lyra?"

James nodded. "Yeah I think so. Is that alright with you?"

Harry grinned. "I think it's brilliant! Now I get two siblings!"

James laughed. "I knew you wouldn't mind. Lily was a bit worried."

"Is Lyra okay with you? I mean, from the impression I got from Uncle Remus she's a little clingy towards him."

James nodded. "She is. He's been named godfather. Would you like to meet her?" Harry nodded and he watched as James used a disillusioning charm and a small little girl appeared next to him. She had short dark brown hair and eyes the colour of aged whiskey. She almost looked like Remus a bit. "Hey honey, this is my son, Harry, he's going to be your big brother."

"Hi Lyra," Harry murmured, kneeling down so that he was eye to eye in front of her.

She managed a small smile for him before she buried her face in James' leg.

"She's a bit shy yet." He scooped her up into his arms and she snuggled into his shoulder. "She'll come around. She likes to cuddle and she's very trusting, which surprises me because only Merlin knows what she went through. From what I gathered through Moony she was bitten a little over a year ago and her parents deserted her right away. Greyback picked her up from there."

Harry nodded. "She looks a bit like Remus, the eye colour that is. It's not very common."

James grinned. "Lily said the same thing. Remus held his hands up and stated she wasn't his, he swore it. Odd but cute. She's beautiful."

Harry grinned. "Yeah she is. This is great! Are you changing her name?"

"Yeah. It's all being finalized tomorrow. I put a rush on it. It was easy since her parents abandoned her. Lyra Lilah Potter. Her middle name



was already Lilah; I'm taking that as a sign. It's pretty close to Lily."

"That's great, Da!" He smiled up at Lyra and gently ran a hand through her hair. "Hey, you're going to be so loved."

She smiled at him and he kissed her small hand. This seemed to be the sign she was waiting for because she opened her arms and crawled into Harry's.

"Well, hello."

James laughed. "See? Told you she'd come around."

Harry kissed her cheek. "Yeah, hey Lyra, you're going to be so spoiled."

James grinned. "She is. Well, I know that you've got a Hogsmeade trip today and I bet you've got plans to spend it with Ginny so we'll get out of your way. There will be Order members all over the village, remember?"

He nodded. "I know. It will be fine and it will be fun. Gin and I need a day out like this."

James leaned forward to kiss his son's forehead. "Yeah. Have you seen Draco around? I want him to meet Lyra."

Harry shook his head. "Nah, I don't where he is."

James nodded. "Alright, well, tell him the news, will you? Come on princess, I bet mum's waiting for us at home."

Lyra opened her arms to James and snuggled close. "Cookie?"

James laughed. "You bet." He winked at Harry. "I'll talk to you later."

Harry watched him go and he grinned. He couldn't wait to tell Ginny the news.

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Harry held Ginny's hand in his a few hours later as they walked through the streets of Hogsmeade. It was so nice to finally get out of the castle and enjoy the day. Every once in a while, Harry would bring her hand to his lips and she smiled.

"You're awfully quiet you know, are you alright?"

He shrugged. "I'm alright. I just keep thinking about Lyra. I've got a little sister and soon Mum's going to have a baby and I'll have a baby brother or sister. It's a nice feeling. I've always looked at you're family and been a little jealous that you've got so many brothers. I want to have that relationship that you do with Bill and Charlie. I hope Lyra and I will have it and the baby too."

Ginny smiled. "Oh, honey, you will. It will be wonderful." She stood on her toes to kiss him softly just as they heard a shout.

They turned as Seamus and Lavender hurried towards them. "Hey guys, how's it going?"

Ginny smiled and slipped her arm around Harry's waist. "Great and you."

Seamus grinned down at his girlfriend, his eyes alight with happiness. "Perfect."

Lavender grinned and kissed him softly. "He's ridiculously sweet. We went into this flower shop and he bought me one single flower of every kind I loved."

"Oh, that's so sweet," Ginny murmured.

Lavender nodded. "Yeah. I'm glad he smartened up. To think he liked me this whole time and never said anything!"

Seamus grinned sheepishly. "Me too." Then he leaned down to kiss her softly.

"Oy!" Ron bellowed out as he and Hermione hurried towards them.

“Will all of you stop snogging? It’s enough to make a body sick!”

Hermione yanked him towards her and kissed him. “Feeling sick, Ron?”

He grinned and pulled her back. “Nuh-huh.”

Harry laughed. “Figures. Come on; let’s go down to the Three Broomsticks.”

“Good plan.” Ginny replied before she yanked him forward for another kiss. Harry just grinned; the day was turning out to be a good one.

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Draco sat in the Three Broomsticks nursing his butterbeer, wishing that it was something stronger. His life kept getting better and worse at the same time. He had taken James’ advice and he had written to the Parkinsons’ asking if it was alright to postpone the wedding until the following summer. He wanted to finish school first. He hadn’t heard a reply yet but he had a feeling that it wasn’t going to be the answer he wanted. He managed small grin as he watched Blaise, Daphne, Ted, Dana, Tracy, and Tony sit down in a booth nearby.

Everyone was happy and everyone was with someone they loved. He felt lonely almost. But he had friends that actually cared about him for once, for him and not because he was supposed to hang out with him. Crabbe and Goyle had been minions almost. They had followed him around and they had hung out with him because they were told to. They had done everything he said because he had more brains. The gits had done anything they were told to do. They hadn’t known anything about him. He remembered clearly up until the last day of school the year before that he had treated Harry and his friends like dirt. He had made fun of them. He had gone out of his way to try to hurt them in some way and now he was friends with them. He didn’t understand people so much. He didn’t understand himself.

Blaise and Ted were really awesome and he was ashamed of the fact that he hadn’t bothered to get to know them before. He had shared a dorm room with them for five years yet he hadn’t known them, not

really. Now he knew that Blaise wanted to be an Auror and that he had every intention of marrying Daphne as soon as she agreed to it. He was hopelessly in love with her. He now knew that Ted had almost as hard of a life as him but a bit better because his mother cared enough to take him away from his father. He and Dana had been dating for two years now and they were happily content.

He also had realized a few more things about friendship that he hadn't known ... people didn't hate him when they knew his true colours. He had hidden behind a mask for most of his life; the mask that his father wanted to see; the mask that his mother had insisted on. He had done and accepted everything that he was told. He had hated who he was supposed to hate. He had never gone out of his way to be nice or to make new friends. Why should he bother? It wasn't worth his time if they were not considered socially acceptable. It didn't matter anyway, it's not like the friends he had actually knew anything about him. Pansy claimed she loved him but what did she know? She knew nothing about him, nothing about his life. The only people who did know had accepted it simply and were now treating him like ... a friend, he realized. They were treating him like a good friend.

He closed his eyes as he remembered the way that Lily Potter had held him as he cried and told her what happened. He was embarrassed by it but at the same time he was more grateful to her than he was to anyone else. She had made him tell his secrets and reach out to the people that wanted to accept him. He had told Harry everything and he felt closer to him yet at the same time he felt far away. He had told Blaise and Ted as well and was surprised to know that Ted shared many of the same experiences. His father was a Death Eater and he knew the consequences of that just as much as he did. He had friends.

Now James and Lily Potter had adopted him. They had offered him a loving home and a place to stay. He didn't know how to react to that. Then Harry had stopped him one day and told him that his mum was having a baby. He felt like he was intruding on an intimate family time. He tried to say as much but Harry had told him that he was arse and that he was part of the family now. He wasn't sure how he felt about that. He didn't want to be a brother or anything and he thought

scared him but they didn't expect him too. Harry told him that he could be an honorary uncle. Draco had grinned at those words, an honorary uncle ... he liked the sound of that. It wasn't pushing him into anything so much and it let him set the pace. Then only that morning he had found out that James and Lily had adopted a little girl named Lyra. Harry had grinned and said something along the lines of Lyra being anxious to meet her Uncle Draco. He grinned to himself ... family was something that he didn't understand but he was definitely learning to love.

He watched as Harry and Ginny stepped into the pub, their arms wrapped around each other's waists followed by Ron, Hermione, Seamus, Lavender, Luna, and Neville. All of them made great couples. He waved and Harry grinned at him before they headed towards his table.

"Hey! Why are you sitting by yourself?" Harry asked as he sat down next to him, pulling Ginny down into his lap.

Draco shrugged. "No particular reason. You guys enjoying your day?"

Ginny cuddled closer to Harry and kissed him. "Most certainly."

Draco laughed. "You two are crazy."

"And they never stop bloody snogging!" Ron exclaimed as he took a seat. "Every time I turn around there they go! See!" He pointed as they kissed again.

Hermione rolled her eyes and turned Ron towards her. "Shut up, Ron!" Then she kissed him making Seamus whistle as Ron's ears turned red.

Draco laughed. "Yeah I see."

Harry grinned. "Yeah, so I mentioned it briefly this morning, but, mate, you have got to meet Lyra she's a doll."

"Uncle Draco." Ginny replied with a grin.

Draco blushed. "Yeah, I don't know anything about kids and I mean ... well, hell I thought I'd have a bit more time, you know?"

Harry grinned. "Come on, mate, it will be great! Lyra's a little shy at the moment but she was living with Greyback! She needs time to adjust, but she'll love you."

"Greyback ... that man is pure evil." Draco replied. "I only met him once and my parents made me leave the room quickly. They didn't even trust him."

"Makes sense," Ginny replied. "He's a dangerous man. Look at what he did to Remus!"

"It was bad from what you said," Seamus replied. "I'm glad he's okay. Lupin was a great guy!"

Lavender nodded. "Definitely the best professor we ever had other than Black."

Harry laughed. "Uncle Sirius does keep things interesting, eh? Well, now that we've got a lot of things settled and that Dumbledore finally took a chance and looked at us and realized that we're not kids anymore I think it will change. The Order is an important establishment."

"I've been meaning to ask you, Potter ... why did you ask Delilah to join?" Draco asked.

"Because she's powerful and she needs something like this to help her fight back." Harry replied. "Don't you agree?"

He nodded as he watched her from across the room. She was sitting with her friend Mandy and they were talking about something that was obviously making her angry. He wanted to go over there and offer her comfort but he knew that it would just be thrown back into his face. He closed his eyes for a moment before he turned back to the group just as Blaise, Daphne, Ted, Dana, Tracy, and Tony appeared.

“Yeah.”

Ron’s eyebrows rose in surprise. “Goldstein, didn’t know you were dating anyone?”

Tracy grinned. “He smartened up, finally decided to give me a chance.”

Seamus laughed. “Tony, you prat, she’s gorgeous! What the hell were you waiting for?”

Tony shrugged. “She’s a Slytherin. I was being cautious.”

Tracy grinned and kissed him. “Which is wise, I will give him credit.”

Blaise grinned. “Yeah, so mind if we join the party?”

Harry shrugged. “Make yourselves comfortable.”

They took a seat around the table just as Dean came in with Lisa Turpin on his arm. “Hey, you guys how’s it going?”

He sat down as well just as a loud bang erupted from outside.

“What the hell was that?” Seamus asked as Lavender grabbed his arm.

Harry shook his head. “I don’t know.”

But their questions were answered when a group of hooded men and women entered the pub. Two of them were holding some terrified looking fourth years. The one at the front grinned.

“Well, Rosmerta, looks like you’ve got a full house!”

Rosmerta stood up from behind the bar. “You get out of here now! I don’t allow Death Eaters in my place!”

One of the men smirked and Draco felt the cold filter through his system. He knew that smirk. “Oh, I think we’ll just stay here thanks.”

He picked up one of the fourth year girls that the one next to him was holding and he threw her across the room. She screamed as the pub went silent.

Draco stood up now, his wand out. "You don't have any right to be here."

Lucius pulled his hood off. "You're a disgrace, Draco, do you know that? Sitting there at that table with blood traitors and mudbloods and half-breeds! How dare you tell me what to do?"

Harry stood up now too. "Get out, Malfoy."

Lucius sneered. "Or what?"

One of the men next to him that Harry recognized from the ministry as Dolohov pulled out his wand and pointed it at Rosmerta. "We just want to have some fun, Potter. Crucio!"

The pub filled with the sound of her screams and panic erupted. People began to run and hide beneath tables. Harry knew members of the Order would be arriving any minute and he wondered how they managed to get into the village without being detected.

"Come on; we've got to keep them busy fighting!" Harry shouted.

The members of the DA nodded and they all hurried towards the Death Eaters wands ready. Harry started dueling with the first Death Eater he approached. He recognized the woman as Lacroix. The one who had impersonated Madam Bones; he hadn't even been aware that she had escaped from Azkaban.

"Stupefy!" He yelled, feeling better to know that he had momentarily taken her off of her feet. He headed for another person quickly. If they could knock as many down as possible until other members of the Order arrived it would risk the damage to the students and the pub.

He grinned when he heard a familiar voice shout out. "Batiou Bogiuesco!"



Huge green bogies erupted from the face of Macnair, turning into bats and then began to attack his face as he shrieked. "Great one, Gin!"

She grinned at him. "I've got more." She aimed her wand at Macnair and muttered an incantation under her breath. Macnair shrieked and Harry could see why. Over the crotch of his pants was a huge bat bogey that seemed to squeezing hard enough that his face was turning red.

"Ouch," Harry muttered. "Remind me to never get on your bad side."

She laughed. "Alright."

Hermione was fighting Bellatrix and a woman she didn't recognize. She dived out of the way of the stunning jinx and stunned both of them causing Ron to grin at her.

"Looks like you don't need to be saved."

Hermione grinned. "No, I'm alright, what about you?"

Ron stunned Goyle Senior as he moved towards them. "I'm alright. But I'm thinking he's not." He replied pointing to Draco.

Hermione gasped. "My God, this can't end well."

Ron nodded as he stunned another Death Eater who was attacking a third year. "He can handle it, Mione. Draco's a cocky SOB, but he's known this moment would come. Personally, I think it's the time we find out just what side he's on."

"Ron!" Hermione exclaimed. "He's on our side! And you should trust him."

He shrugged as some Order members came through the front doors. "Old habits die hard. Now come on! Let's try to get some of these kids out of here!"

She nodded and hurried after him, Seamus and Lavender coming to help them.

On the other side of the pub, Draco stood in front of his father, his wand pointed at him.

“Going to fight me, Draco?” Lucius asked with a grin.

Draco didn’t speak. He knew at that moment as he heard Rosmerta’s tortured screams around him and people crying that he hated his father more than anyone else in the world. He sent a curse flying towards him that knocked him off his feet and he flew back into the bar. He was no longer watching what was happening around him. He had no idea what was happening though he could hear a stream of curses and jinxes along with screams and shouts. His eyes were on his father.

Lucius wiped blood from his mouth as he stood up. “Crucio!”

Draco didn’t make a sound as the spell hit him. He was used to the pain of it and he bit his tongue until it bled to keep from screaming. When the spell let up his wand hand steadied. “Blastio!”

The curse sent a red blast of light barreling towards Lucius and literally blasted him off of his feet so that he flew through the air and into the ceiling.

He stood up angrily. “Crucio!”

The spell knocked Draco back and this time he yelled as his body began to bend and stretch. He heard something snap and knew that it was his arm. When the curse lifted from his body, he was aching as he tried to crawl to his feet.

Delilah’s eyes widened as she watched him, momentarily forgetting about her duel with Dolohov. He was dueling with his father. She couldn’t believe it! His father was using an Unforgivable on him and that was worse. She shrieked when an arm wrapped around her neck. She turned to see Dolohov there leering at her.

“Think your clever do you, you little bitch?” He backhanded her and she went flying.

She crawled around for her wand and moaned when a foot stepped on it and she looked up into the eyes of Lucius Malfoy.

“Well, well, well, Dolohov, who do we have here?”

“Leave her alone!” Draco yelled as he got to his feet, his wand pointed at his father.

Lucius reached down and yanked her to her feet by her hair as Dolohov ran his hands over her. “But she’s pretty. She looks familiar too.”

“Reducto!” Draco bellowed, the curse shooting out and cutting off Dolohov’s left arm, reducing it to ash. He screamed as Lucius’ raised his eyebrow in surprise.

“Draco, I am surprised. You have more strength then I realized. Never thought you had the stomach for it. I’m impressed.” He slid his wand under Delilah’s throat. “You want me to hurt her, Draco. I can do many things to her. I’ll even let you watch.”

“Like you did to her mother! I know what you did! I saw it!” Draco shouted, his wand still pointing. “Let her go!”

“Crucio!” Lucius yelled as Draco hit the floor again. When the curse lifted he grinned. “Miriam Knight ... she was a beauty.” He turned to look down at Delilah. “I see that you take after her. Maybe I’ll let you share in everything your mother did. Would you like that? Crucio!” He held her with one hand as she screamed and her body twitched.

“Stop it!” Draco exclaimed. “Let her go!”

Lucius grinned, taking the curse off as Delilah’s body hung limply against him “You want me to save her, to let her go?”

Draco nodded as he stumbled to his feet. His eyes met Delilah’s and he could see the anger and the fear in them. “Yes.”

Lucius grinned. “Alright, I’ll let her go. I’ll let everyone go, here in this

pub. No one will hurt another person. All you have to do is come with me, Draco. The Dark Lord wants you on his side.”

He turned his head to look around. The DA members were still fighting. Order members had come in and he could see James and Sirius fighting alongside of McGonagall and Flitwick and other members that he didn't know the names of. There were some students on the ground bleeding and he didn't know if they were alive or dead. He turned and his eyes met Delilah's. He could stop everything all he had to do was go back to the one thing that he had fought to escape from. He watched as his father ran his wand down between her breasts and she shuddered and struggled against him. He knew what he had to do.

He let his wand drop to the ground and he saw the flash of triumph in his father's eyes. “Fine, take me.”

“NO!” Delilah shrieked.

Lucius tossed her to the floor and grabbed a fistful of Draco's hair. “This is why you're an idiot! Crucio!”

Delilah scrambled around on the ground as Draco's screams echoed in her ears and she grabbed Draco's wand. “Blastio!” She yelled as Lucius was blasted off of his feet again. He flew back, his nose was bleeding now and so was his lip.

He glared at her and pointed his wand. “Sectumsempra!” The spell came barreling towards her and she couldn't move. Draco's wand fell from her hands just as Draco pushed her out of the way. The spell ripped through him and he screamed as gashes came through his body. He could feel the blood and he coughed some up before he passed out.

Harry came running over as the Death Eaters began to run out of the building. “Delilah, are you okay?” He asked as he turned Draco over. “Damn. Da!” He yelled.

Delilah nodded. “He took the curse for me. He took it. He was fighting ... his father ... is he going to be alright?”

"I don't know."

James came running over and he paled when he saw Draco. He picked him up instantly. "We've got to get him to the hospital wing immediately. There are few other injuries. Harry, can you make sure everyone is alright?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, take Draco."

James nodded and he Disapparated on the spot.

Harry turned to Delilah. "Are you injured?"

She shook her head. "Not bad, I can help."

He nodded. "Alright, let's go round up everyone and get them to the hospital."

Delilah nodded as she hurried after him. The room was in chaos and bodies were on the floor. They began to tedious task of turning people over and trying to find out if they were dead or alive. She had been so involved in her duel and then with the shock of Draco that she hadn't realized the damage that was going on around her. It had been a bloody battle.

Harry, Ginny, Ron, and Hermione were walking around trying to find out who was alright. A couple of third and fourth years were injured from debris that had hit them during the battle, but no one was seriously injured. From what she could tell, Draco had experienced the most damage. She closed her eyes as everyone began to leave the pub. He had saved her life.

She grabbed Harry's arm as he walked past her. "I need to see him. He ... that curse was for me."

Harry nodded. "I know. Come on." He took her hand in his and he took the medical portkey with her and eight other students to bring them to the hospital wing.

Madam Pomfrey fussed over her and everyone and by the time that the hospital wing had emptied out she still hadn't managed to get over to see Draco. Finally she managed to escape from the grip of the matron and she snuck over to the curtain he was behind. She was about to pull it open when she heard voices.

"He dived in front of her, Harry?" James asked. "Are you sure?"

Harry nodded. "I saw it. He took the curse for her. She knows it and she's scared. This proves everything. He was in a duel with his own father and he almost killed him!"

"That man is ... look at him, Jamie." Lily murmured, running her fingers through Draco's tousled blonde hair. "He almost killed him! The impact of the spell alone ... the cuts on his body ... some of them are so deep. Do you think he'll be scarred?"

James shrugged. "I don't know. I would think he'd have a few. He held his own tonight that's for sure."

Harry nodded. He was holding Lyra in his arms as Lily had shown up with her as soon as they had found out about Draco. She was sleeping on his shoulder. "Madam Pomfrey said he'll be alright and he definitely held his own. He was the first one to stand up and fight. He had his wand pointed and ready when he told his father to get out."

"He'll be sore for a few days. Poppy cleaned up and healed most of the cuts but a few of those gashes went deep. The ones in his throat and sides especially." James replied. "He's got some healing to do."

Lily nodded. "We'll be here for him. He's legally ours now."

Draco's eyes fluttered open at those words. "Mmm," he moaned.

Lily brought his hand to her lips. "It's okay, sweetheart, I know it hurts but you'll be okay."

"Lily?" He asked.

She smiled. "Yes and James and Harry and Lyra."

He looked around. "She's pretty."

Harry grinned. "She's sleeping but she was scared for you." He leaned down a bit to bring her closer and Draco ran his fingers through her hair.

The feel of his hands in her hair made her eyes open and she managed a small smile for him. "Uncle Draco hurt?" She asked.

Draco grinned. He liked the sound of Uncle Draco. "Yeah. It's nice to meet you, Lyra."

She smiled and then reached down to kiss his head. "All better."

He laughed. "Yeah, thanks."

Harry grinned as Lyra snuggled a bit closer on his shoulder. "Do you remember what happened?"

He nodded. "Yeah. Delilah! Is she alright?"

"She's fine. She's a little freaked out; you did take that curse for her."

"Yeah, I don't know ... it was impulse. Father was talking about doing to her what he did to her mother and he ... he told me that he'd let everyone go if I went with him, if I joined Voldemort. I knew that he was lying, I mean ... I did but I agreed. He laughed at me and used the Cruciatus, throwing Delilah aside like she was nothing." He explained. "She grabbed my wand and she sent him flying that was when he turned to curse her and I just ... I just pushed her out of the way. It was me he wanted, not her."

Tears were in Lily's eyes and she leaned down to kiss his cheeks. "You are a wonderful young man! Lucius never deserved you."

James nodded. "Draco, when we agreed to take custody of you it was only so that you could escape that home. You'll be seventeen in two months but ... Lily and I would ..."

“We’d like to be parents to you if you’d let us. Spoil you and make you squirm in discomfort when we cover your face in kisses in public like Harry does.”

“Or roll his eyes and turn red.”

Harry blushed. “Hey! I am standing here.”

James pulled him close and kissed his head. “I know. I love you, Harry.”

Lily nodded. “But we love you too, Draco. You don’t want to be a brother to Lyra and the baby and I get that. It’s a big step, something that we don’t want to force you into. An honorary uncle is more fun, I suppose, and Sirius and Remus can give you advice on that through Harry, but we love you and if you ever need anything you come to us. You write, you talk to Harry, anything.”

“I’ve got a better idea.” James replied. “I originally had three of these. One belonged to me, one to Sirius, and one to my Da. We used them to talk when we had problems or Sirius and I used them when we were in separate detentions. I gave my Da’s to Harry. Sirius and Remus both have them now and so does Tonks and Lexy. We’ve made another one for Lily. They’re all connected. All you have to do is say the person’s name that you’d like to talk to and their face appears in this mirror.” He pulled it out of his pocket. “If you need anything, give me a shout.”

Delilah took a step back from the curtain. She had never expected to hear something like this. She had ... everything she knew about him was wrong. Tears rolled down her cheeks as guilt swam through her system but even as she made to turn away, her attention was focused on the conversation between them on the other side of the curtain.

Draco nodded. “I ... I don’t know what to say. I was thinking earlier about what a cocky bastard I was ... I know that I was raised to be that way and I did what was asked of me. I spoke to only the people considered socially acceptable. I wanted to be friends with Harry, but



I ruined that chance when I said a bad thing about the Weasleys. I now know that was wrong. Molly and Arthur are some of the kindest people I've ever met and you ... you want me to be a part of your family and even while I don't understand why, I like it. I can be myself around you and around the new friends I've made. You love me and again I don't know why, but it makes me feel good inside. Thank you."

James grinned and he leaned down to kiss Draco's forehead. "You're very welcome. Here, I'll put this here on the night table for you. Are you feeling alright?"

"Yeah, I'm a little sore."

Lily smiled. "Here, Poppy left you some pain potion. Drink up."

"I don't want to sleep," he murmured.

She nodded. "Alright, but when the pain gets too intense —"

"I'll drink every drop."

Lily smiled and kissed his hand again. "Good."

James glanced at his watch. "Lil, I know you want to stay but we've got to go meet Dumbledore and talk about the attack. Get some reports done and things."

Lily nodded. "We'll come back again later on, alright?"

"It's okay. I'm fine really."

Harry rolled his eyes. "Don't even try to argue, it's a waste of time."

James grinned. "See, Harry knows. Remember that time you had dragon pox when you were ten and I was in your room sitting with you every ten minutes?"

Harry groaned. "I screamed for Uncle Moony and told him to tie you up somewhere. It worked. I was alone for about ten minutes but then Uncle Moony showed up and did the same bloody thing!"

“Language Harry.”

He grinned. “Sorry Mum.”

James laughed. He leaned down to kiss Draco’s forehead and then Lily did. Lyra reached down to kiss his cheek before she snuggled into James’ arms. She was very cuddly and loving considering where she had come from and Draco found it a bit odd. “See you later.”

They both hugged and kissed Harry before they left.

“So what do you think of Lyra?” Harry asked.

Draco smiled. “She’s sweet. She’s very ... I don’t know loving and acceptable considering, I thought she would be more withdrawn.”

Harry nodded. “I did too. Da says that she has some nightmares and ends up in bed with them a lot but she’s doing well. As for you, you’re part of the family now and there’s no escaping.”

He grinned. “I guess not. Thanks, for everything.”

“No problem. Look I’m going to go get some homework done and stuff but you’ve got the mirror. If you need anything, call me.”

Draco nodded. “I will thanks.”

Delilah moved back when Harry came out and his eyes widened in surprise. “Go on in, I’m sure that he’d like to see you.”

She nodded before she stepped inside. His eyes were closed and he didn’t see her. She took a deep breath before she spoke. “Hi Draco.”

His eyes flew open and they met hers. “Delilah, are you alright?”

She nodded and took a seat on the edge of the bed. “Yes. I ... you look horrible.”

He laughed. “Well, I hurt a little bit.”

She smiled. "Draco listen, I just ... I just wanted to say that I'm-"

"DRACO!" Pansy shrieked, running into the room and leaning down to kiss him. "Merlin I have been so worried! They wouldn't let me into see you! It was horrible!"

He pushed her away. "Pansy, let go, that hurts!"

"Oh Drakey, I'm so sorry."

Delilah stood up. Her eyes darting back and forth between the two of them. "Um ... I have to go. I hope you get better, Draco."

"Delilah!" Draco exclaimed as he watched her hurry out around the curtain. His eyes met Pansy's. "What are you doing here?"

She looked shocked. "You're hurt! I wanted to make sure you were alright! And I find you sitting in here with that tramp."

Draco rolled his eyes. "She's not a tramp! And we were not doing anything! She just wanted to make sure I was alright. She saw me get hurt."

Pansy nodded, tears in her eyes. "I was so worried when I heard! I was in Gladrags with Shawnee and Linda."

"Look Pansy, I'm tired alright. Can we talk later?"

She nodded and leaned down to kiss him again. "Of course! I'll sit right here!"

"NO! I mean, Pansy, just go. I don't want you here!"

She snorted. "I am your fiancée!"

"I don't care. Get out."

She glared at him before she stood up. "You could be a bit more considerate! I was worried!"

“Great, be considerate! Leave me the hell alone!”

“Fine! And just so you know! My parents ARE NOT changing the wedding date!” She sneered at him as she left. “You will be my husband and I will be Mrs. Draco Malfoy.”

He watched her go and he groaned. Something horrible always seemed to ruin his happiness. His thoughts drifted off to Delilah. Why had she been there? She had held concern in her eyes. He smiled and reached over to drink the pain potion. If he thought of Delilah, he would feel better. He closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep.

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## **Chapter 83: Happiness and Sorrow**

**Author's Notes:** plz review! for anyone interested - ive posted hints of what to come on my myspace;) check out my bio for the link:D

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## **Chapter Eighty-Three — Happiness and Sorrow**

Draco was in the hospital for a week before Madam Pomfrey let him leave. The gashes had been deep and he had been drinking so many potions during the days that he was there that he could barely keep up. He was anxious to leave and to eat real food. If the week in the hospital wasn't bad enough, Pomfrey made him go see her twice a day every day for the week after he was released. He groaned and grumbled about it but at the same time he was secretly pleased that he was being treated so well and that people actually cared about his well-being.

Lily, James, and Lyra were there every day visiting him. If not all together, they showed up at one point or another. Remus, Tonks, and Daniel came as well. The visitors made him smile and they made him remember that he had somehow ended up with a family. Molly and Arthur had even showed up to make sure that he was okay. Molly

fussed over him just as much as Lily did. He grumbled about it, but he loved it.

Blaise, Daphne, Ted, Dana, Harry, Ginny, Ron, Hermione, Seamus, Lavender, Neville, Luna, and so many others visited him on a regular basis, as well. They all had stories to tell from the battle as well as rumours to inform him about what was going on. Draco was thought to be hero at the moment and the entire school was buzzing with it.

Now three weeks had passed and the school was still buzzing about the attack. None of the Death Eaters had been caught, even if their identities were known. Draco himself was the person who was the most injured and he had gotten back up on his feet fairly quickly which made the school see him as a hero. Pansy was still fussing over him every damn minute and he was ready to curse her. She didn't seem to understand that he wanted her to leave him alone. It was Delilah that was constantly on his mind. Why had she come to visit him in the hospital? She had only shown up that one day and it was on his mind constantly. If only Pansy hadn't ... he swore angrily. It didn't matter. His birthday was coming up soon and then he was going to be married. Married at seventeen. He closed his eyes at the thought. It made him sick to his stomach to think about his soon to be wife.

He managed a small smile for Ginny when he noticed her approaching him and he tried to push his sour thoughts away. "Hello."

She grinned. "Hey look who's up and about and walking and talking. It's only been three weeks do you think maybe Madam Pomfrey should look you over again?"

He glared at her. "Don't even think about it!"

She laughed. "It's good to see you back. I never thought I'd see the day that I was worried about you. But we all were. It was scary there for a minute."

He nodded. "Yeah, for me too."

Ginny smiled. "Well come on, we've got a bit of a surprise going on

for Easter weekend.”

He gave her a puzzled look. “What kind of surprise?”

She grinned. “We’re going to the manor! Actually we’re leaving pretty much now. We just had to find you. Sirius just found Harry and I to tell us. We’ve been working on trying to find everyone.”

Draco grinned. “The manor? Really?”

“It’s good to see you smiling.”

“Hey Malfoy, leave my girl alone!” Harry replied grinning as he hurried towards them, tugging Ginny into his arms.

Ginny laughed and pulled Harry close for a kiss. “I’m a tease, can’t help it.”

Harry laughed. “Yeah, I know it. Alright let’s go!”

Harry led the way up to Dumbledore’s office where they met Ron and Hermione along with Sirius. “Lex took a portkey there. Floo makes her a little sick.” Sirius explained before anyone could ask where his wife was.

They stepped into the fire and soon they were all bringing luggage and other belongings that Dumbledore asked the elves to pack up for them, to their appropriate rooms. Draco followed Harry down the stairs just as Lyra came into the hallway.

“Harry!” She giggled as he picked her up and spun her around the room.

“Hey Lyra, how’s it going?” She kissed his cheek and then blushed when she looked over at Draco.

“Hi Uncle Draco.”

Draco smiled at her and reached over to pat her back and then he stared at Harry in shock when Lyra basically jumped into his arms.

“Uh, hi.”

Lily smiled when she stepped into the room. “I see Lyra’s found you. She’s been jumping in excitement ever since James and I mentioned that the two of you were coming over for the weekend.”

Harry grinned. “Yeah, we’re good. Hey Mum, do you know where Ginny went?”

“I think she’s in the common room, sweetheart.”

Harry winked at her. “Good let’s go find her, together.”

“Uh,” Draco murmured as Lyra continued to snuggle into his arms. “Don’t go.”

Harry grinned. “Don’t worry about it, Draco! You and Lyra will be just fine.”

Lily and Harry left the room and Draco stared down at Lyra and gulped. What the hell did he know about a six-year-old-kid? We’re they insane leaving him alone with her?

“Pretty,” Lyra murmured as she touched his hair.

He smiled down at her and when she placed her small mouth on his cheek his heart simply melted. “What am I going to do with you?”

“Play,” she replied, grinning. “Da bought me a doll, want to see?”

He smiled at her. She was the cutest little thing. He was surprised at the protective urge he felt towards her. “Yeah. I want to see.”

She grinned. “Uncle Draco, it’s so pretty. Da says the doll is a princess just like me.”

Sirius stood at the base of the stairs as he watched Lyra lead Draco out of the room chatting absently. The kid was a jewel and he knew that she was exactly what Draco needed. If she couldn’t help pull Draco out of his shell, then Sirius didn’t know what would. He smiled

up at Lexy as she came down the stairs. She was rounding now. She was almost six months pregnant and definitely getting bigger. But he couldn't take his eyes off of her. He loved lying in bed next to her at night and running his hands over her swelling stomach knowing that that was his child in there. His baby was there, just under the surface.

"What?" Lexy asked, blushing a bit. "Why are you staring at me like that?"

He grinned and pulled her down to kiss her softly. "I love you."

She stared at him in surprise. Sirius wasn't one to say the words very often. "I love you too."

"Sometimes, I just look at you and it grabs me by the throat, you know? Merlin you're so beautiful." He leaned down to kiss her again.

Their lips met softly and Lexy reached up to put her arms around his neck to drag him closer. The kiss was soft and sweet yet it held so much meaning behind it. He made her feel things that she couldn't even explain but she knew that she loved him more than anything.

He broke away for just a moment to smile down at her. "Why don't we just skip this little get together and head back upstairs?" He asked, his voice husky from need that she could feel stirring within herself.

"Sirius, we need to visit."

His lips moved down her jaw to her neck. "We can visit later. We've got the whole weekend."

"Hey, Padfoot! You can have sex with your wife later; get your arse into the living room!" James demanded with a big grin on his face as he stood in the entrance way with a tray of drinks.

"Go away, Prongs," Sirius murmured as he continued to nibble at his wife.

James grinned. "Nope. Later mate, really, come on."



Sirius turned to glare at him as James shrugged before he headed into the common room. He turned to look back at his wife. Her lips were slightly swollen from his and her misty green eyes were dark with need. "Do we have to?"

Lexy nodded. "Yes."

He sighed. "Alright." He scooped her up into his arms and she laughed.

"Sirius! Put me down! I'm perfectly capable of walking! You're going to hurt yourself!"

He laughed. "Please, you weigh what? The same as a bundle of feathers."

She snorted. "As if! Put me down!"

Instead he silenced her with another long kiss before he carried her into the common room. He took a seat on one of the chesterfields and cuddled his wife to him.

James grinned. "Now that everyone's here, I'd like to say something."

The room turned to look at him. Harry was sitting in his favourite armchair with Ginny curled up in his lap. Ron and Hermione were cuddling on the other side of the chesterfield from Sirius and Lexy. Lily was sitting next to James, his arm draped around her. Draco was sitting on the floor, a slightly surprised look on his face as Lyra was snuggled cozily in his lap. Remus had Daniel in his arms as Tonks sat next to him, his arm draped around her. Molly and Arthur were sitting side by side and holding hands. It was comfortable.

"We had a terrible thing happen a few weeks ago." James began. "Death Eaters escaped through the wards and into the village of Hogsmeade. Dumbledore now is not allowing any more trips there and with good reason. Draco knows exactly how intense that battle was. Other things have come into light as well. Remus was seriously injured when on a mission with Greyback and it was through that mission that we found Lyra."

Lyra seemed to take this as a hint and she climbed out of Draco's lap and went to snuggle in between James and Lily. "Da."

James smiled at her. "I never expected to adopt any kids. Lil and I always wanted our own. We lucked out with Harry."

Sirius snorted. "That spoiled brat! If you call that luck!"

"Hey!" Harry said on a laugh. "I'm not a spoiled brat!"

Sirius nodded. "Right, my bad!"

Lily rolled her eyes. "Honestly, can you be serious for once?"

Sirius looked thoughtful for a moment. "I thought I was Sirius."

Remus groaned. "Don't get him started."

Lily nodded, smiling. "Too late. Anyway, as James was saying. We found Lyra and she's so precious to us. But at the same time we also found Draco. We're building a family and it may not be the best time to do so because it's a war. I'm sitting here looking around at all of us. We're all happy and well and healthy and that makes me happy. But at the same time there's a war going on and even through our happiness people are dying."

"It's war out there and if we want to stop so many people from dying; if we want to be able to raise our families away from the war then we need to take better control of the situation." James replied.

"Meaning what?" Harry asked. "How much more control can we take?"

"The Death Eaters, we're not killers like they are. We've been working to capture them as quickly and efficiently as possible but Voldemort keeps helping them escape. Our work is for nothing."

Arthur nodded. "That's true. Bill and I were discussing that yesterday and he mentioned that he had an idea over how to correct the

problem.”

“What kind of idea dear?” Molly asked.

Arthur shrugged. “I don’t know, he didn’t go into much detail. He should be arriving soon though, as should the rest of the children. He wanted to make it clear to everyone here first before he brought it up to Dumbledore. But it was something along the lines of a more carefully planned out prison system. He wanted to use muggle techniques as well as magical. It seemed interesting.”

*“What kind of idea do you think it is, Gin?”* Harry asked her mentally.

*She shrugged. “No idea, but knowing Bill I bet it’s a good one. He would never bring something up to Dad unless he had thoroughly thought it out and examined it. I’d say he’s probably using some ideas and some of his skills from curse-breaking.”*

*“Makes sense. I wonder where Bill is anyway. Is he bringing Fleur with him?”*

Ginny rolled her eyes. *“I hope not.”*

*“Why? I didn’t realize that you had a problem with her?”*

*She sighed. “I don’t really, it’s just ... he’s my favourite brother. He’s always been there for me. Between him and Charlie, they know all of my secrets. I love him and ... I just never pictured him with anyone like Fleur. Don’t get me wrong. She’s powerful, she must be since she was in the tournament and she’s beautiful but ... I don’t know.”*

*“Jealous?”* Harry asked. *“Honey, I think you better talk to him.”*

*“I’m not jealous!”* She exclaimed. *“That would be ridiculous!”*

*“Would it? You’ve always been the one, Gin. You’re his girl in every sense. Fleur’s not going to replace you. You’re not going to lose that bond with him.”*

*“When did you get so wise?”*

He grinned. *"I learned it from you. What do you think?"*

*"I think that you have a very valid point."* She looked up when they heard movement in the hallway. *"I guess I'll have to talk to him then."*

*"Yeah. I like that you're worried about Fleur yet ecstatic over the idea of Emma and Charlie."*

She shrugged. *"But I already love Emma and I know she's perfect for him. Besides, Charlie just thinks its sex, so does Emma for that matter, but I know differently. Those two are just so good for each other. I wonder how long it will take them to realize it."*

*"I don't know."*

"Hey mate!" Ron exclaimed from next to them.

"Yeah?"

"Where were you right now? You and Gin were kind of lost in your own little world."

Harry grinned. "Yeah, I guess we were." He grinned to himself at Ron's puzzled expression.

Bill stepped into the room then with his arm wrapped around Fleur's waist. "Happy Easter, everyone!"

The two of them made their way around the room to greet everyone. When Bill hugged Ginny she held him a minute longer. "Can we talk later?"

He gave her a concerned look and then grinned. "Always." He kissed her cheek before he headed over to Molly and Arthur.

Charlie and Emma came in next but Ginny found it amusing how they didn't come in together. It seemed like they were making a point of looking like they were not in a relationship.

Then to her surprise, Fred walked in with his arm draped around Angelina's shoulders. They took a seat next to them and Ginny grinned, hugging Angelina tight.

"When did this happen?"

Angelina smiled. "Valentine's Day. I'm crazy about the jerk. I never did get over him, you know?"

Ginny nodded. "I'm so glad! I always loved the two of you together!"

Fred turned Angelina so that he could kiss her softly. "Me too."

"Well, if you hadn't broken up with me because you were leaving we wouldn't have had this problem now would we?"

He sighed. "Interesting point."

Angelina grinned and held out her hand to Ginny. "We're not ready to tell his parents yet ... well, I mean we are, but this doesn't seem like the right time with so much tragedy going on and ... well, I don't know as I've only met them once but well we have to tell them later, but you should see first ... we were a little late because we had to celebrate ... twice."

Ginny laughed and then her eyes widened as she looked down at Angelina's left hand. The ring was gorgeous in a simple way. It was a beautiful straight cut gold band with a small trickle of diamonds surrounding the ruby. "Oh my! Angie it's gorgeous!" She whispered.

Fred leaned over to kiss Ginny's cheek. "I told Lina that we've got to keep everything in the Gryffindor spirit. So do I have taste or what?"

Ginny laughed and hugged him. "Fred, it's beautiful! Business must be booming!"

He grinned. "It most certainly is. We've only been back together two months but, I've loved her since sixth year so it was time."

Angelina nodded. "Definitely. Besides, there's other good news on

the horizon, possibly.”

“What?” Ginny asked.

“We left George at the shop as he was involved in a very heated argument with a pretty brunette with glasses.”

“KATIE!” Ginny shrieked. “Please tell me yes.”

“Katie?” Molly asked surprised by her daughter’s out burst. “Who is Katie?”

Ginny grinned. “Katie Bell, Mum? She’s two years older than me and George has been playing pranks on her since her first year. She has a terrible crush on him.”

Angelina snorted. “Crush? Katie fell head over heels in love with George when he asked her to the ball. But it was just a friend thing and she was so crushed.”

Fred nodded. “See that’s where you’re wrong. George has liked Katie for while but he thinks that she’s not his type. She’s too smart and too ... well, good?”

“That’s ridiculous! Those two have been walking on eggshells around each other for longer than I can remember. George would prank Katie she’d get pissed and throw something at him but there was never any yelling.”

“Oh, there was yelling,” Fred replied on a grin. “When he kissed her goodnight on the night of the ball and then dumped her the next day.”

Ginny’s mouth dropped open. “Why that stupid insensitive git! What the hell was he thinking?”

“He was scared. There’s a hell of a lot more between George and Katie than attraction and the kiss scared the crap out of him. He was only sixteen.”

“So what was going on in the shop when you left?” Ginny asked.

Angelina grinned. "Well, Katie's engaged and George is not exactly happy."

"Engaged? To who?" Harry asked. "She's still at school I wasn't even aware that she was dating anyone."

"It's not well-known. But he's a muggle and she met him over the summer. She ... well, she's been in love with George most of her life. It's not going to work with this Darren guy." Angelina replied with a small smirk on her face as she winked at Fred.

Fred nodded. "Yeah, so Angelina came in with Katie because they were looking for something, I don't remember, and George spotted the ring on her finger. The next thing I know he's glaring at her and asking her what the hell it's doing there. So she starts telling him that she's engaged and that it's there for a reason. George said something along the lines of *'Engaged? You can't bloody well be engaged you're still in school? What did the bloke do knock you up or something?'* Well, that got Katie going."

Angelina nodded. "They were yelling at each other and it was a pretty full-blown argument when we left."

"The last thing that I remember was Katie telling George that she was tired of his stupid games and that she wasn't going to wait around for him forever. That she wanted to be happy and if he couldn't see that then he was going to have to leave her alone." Fred replied. "We escaped after that."

Molly was staring at her son in surprise. "How has this been going on under my nose?"

Fred laughed. "Not under your nose, Mum. You've known about Katie since at least fourth year, remember how George was always staring into space and you'd ask him if there was a girl and he'd blush?"

Molly's eyes widened. "If he's liked this girl for that long then what the hell is he doing?"

Fred grinned. "Hopefully convincing her to marry him instead. But I don't know, sometimes George just doesn't have the brains."

"Wow, intense." Sirius replied with a grin.

Charlie nodded. "Sounds like a bloody soap opera."

"Well, I guess we'll find out if and when George ever shows up." Fred replied. "So now that all the gossip is under way, shall we get down to business?"

Molly smiled. "Yes that seems to be in — Angelina dear, what is that on your hand?" Her eyes widened as she stood up to take a closer look. "Is this?" Her eyes darted to her son's. "Frederick?"

Fred blushed. "Lina and I are getting married, Mum. I asked her today."

Molly positively beamed and pulled Angelina into her arms. "Oh dear! Welcome to the family!"

Angelina blushed and hugged Molly back. "Thanks, Mrs. Weasley."

Molly shook her head. "Now, you call me Molly."

Angelina nodded, blushing a bit. "Alright, thanks Molly."

Arthur grinned as he went over to hug Angelina and Fred as well. "This is a happy surprise. Two of our sons both engaged in the same year!"

"Fred, mate, you've only just turned twenty are you sure that you want to saddle yourself down?" Charlie asked.

Molly rolled her eyes. "Yes and you're twenty-five and seem to have no plans of settling down and giving me grandbabies any time soon."

Charlie blushed and Emma smiled at him. "Well ... I was just saying."

Bill grinned. "Don't just say, mate, it causes problems."



Fleur laughed and cuddled into Bill. "So when do you plan to get married?" She asked.

Angelina shrugged. "We haven't really talked about it yet."

Fred nodded. "I'd say within the year, eh Lina?"

She smiled. "That sounds good."

Molly beamed. "Oh wonderful! Now I have another wedding to plan!"

Ginny laughed and turned to whisper in Harry's ear. "If Mum goes this crazy over weddings can you imagine what she's going to be like when it's my turn to get married? Her only daughter and all."

Harry blushed. Marriage, that was a weird thought and yet a surprisingly good one. He could see himself married to Ginny in the future. "I bet she'd have a lot of fun, especially since she'll be butting heads with my mum."

Ginny's eyes widened and she spoke mentally. "*Harry?*"

*"What? I can't imagine my life without you, Gin. Some day I want to make you Mrs. Ginevra Potter, can you handle that?"*

She blushed. "*I can so handle that. I love you so much.*"

She kissed him softly, deepening it just a little until a thump over Harry's head broke them apart.

Fred grinned broadly. "No snogging in public, it's rude."

Ginny stuck her tongue out at him. "You're just jealous because Angie is being passed around the room and you can't snog her."

Fred sighed. "Brat."

She grinned and cuddled back against Harry, turning to kiss his cheek. "I love you."

He nodded. "I love you too."

"Speaking of weddings," Remus spoke up. "When exactly is the big day for you and Fleur?"

Bill grinned. "It's going to be a very private affair, what with the war going on and everything, but we were sort of aiming for the first of May."

"First of May!" Molly exclaimed. "You expect us to plan a wedding in less than two weeks! William, what on earth are you thinking? I thought you were going to wait until the summer!"

Fleur blushed. "Mrs. Weasley, we 'ave already planned most of eet. You 'ave 'elped us so much. We simply 'ave za day booked now."

Bill nodded. "Mum, you know it's all worked out. First of May at the Delacour Estate in France."

"France?" Molly exclaimed.

Bill nodded. "Aye. Her parents have the most beautiful gardens there and fountains ... it's amazing! It's beautiful! And that's where we plan to get married."

Molly nodded. "I can't believe my baby is getting married." She wiped tears from her eyes as Arthur draped his arm around her and gave a helpless shrug to his son.

Ginny laughed. "Look at her; she's so happy and so nervous at the same time."

Fred nodded. "Yeah. She's ready to have one of us tie the knot. Look at how she still babies us, she needs grandchildren."

"Are you and Angie planning on giving her any anytime soon?"

Fred paled. "Well, not right away."

“Not right away what?” Angelina asked as she came and sat down in his lap.

“Giving mum some grandchildren.” Ginny supplied.

Angelina grinned. “I think that I would be terrified out of my mind to have this bloke’s kids. Can you imagine how crazy they will be?” She kissed Fred softly. “But I can’t wait.”

Fred beamed. “Really?”

She nodded. “Yeah, really.”

“Wow, what a way to start off the weekend?” Draco replied as he slid over next to them. “So much happy news at once.”

Harry nodded. “I know it’s nice to hear happy news after the sadness we’ve been hearing.” He smiled when he noticed Lyra sleeping, wrapped in James’ arms. “It’s late, Lyra’s passed out.”

Ginny smiled as she watched Lyra cuddle for a moment. “Harry, have you noticed that Lyra seems to be more comfortable around men than she does women? I mean, Lily holds her and cuddles and her kisses her but other than Lily, she doesn’t let any other woman touch her.”

Harry glanced at Ginny in surprise. “You know, I didn’t notice that. Why do you suppose that is?”

“I don’t know. Maybe Remus does though or maybe he doesn’t know either but she’s clingy and she’s sweet but only to certain people. She trusts Remus with her life and he told her that she could trust James and Lily. Through your parents she moved onto you and Draco but ... she doesn’t seem to be open to anyone else.” Ginny explained.

“Yeah, I guess so.” He was quiet for a moment and when he spoke again it was mentally so that only Ginny could hear. *“Lyra’s good for my parents though. I never would have considered them adopting her but now that they have ... it’s exactly what they needed.”*

*"What do you mean?"*

*He shrugged. "I don't know it's just ... for most of my life it was just Da and me. Mum was always there with Da because he was visiting her and telling her everything that she needed to know but ... she wasn't here. Then suddenly you brought her back into our lives. Da had the one thing that he wanted more than anything. But you could tell right off the bat that their relationship was different. Da was pampering her and happy that she was back but he was so careful. When I mentioned them giving me a baby brother or sister, Mum was practically beaming in happiness and Da looked a bit shell-shocked. But I mean ... they need to be parents; does that make sense?"*

*"Yes that makes a world of sense. You're not their little boy anymore. James has been here to watch you grow up and he knows that you're getting older and that he can't make decisions for you anymore. Lily however, only just got you back and she still kind of sees you as her baby. She lost a lot of years and she has to catch up in so many more ways than she already has. Lyra gives them the chance to enjoy that childhood together. Then when Lily has the baby they get to start all over again. But this time it will be better because they will have you to help and now Lyra." Ginny explained. "You'll be a family."*

Fred's eyes turned towards them. "Who will be a family?"

Harry grinned. "Me. I'm just watching Lyra over there." He kissed Ginny's cheek. "I'll be right back."

He walked over to the chesterfield where they were sitting and he sat down just as James moved Lyra into his arms so that she could sleep on his shoulder. "Here, I'll take the princess, Lil."

Lily laughed. "You're going to spoil her you know if you keep calling her princess."

James grinned. "You always said the same thing about Harry and he's not spoiled is he?"

Harry grinned. "Nah, I'm good."

“Hey, I didn’t even see you come over here. Have a seat.” James replied, moving over so that he could squeeze in between his parents. “You looked cozy over there with Ginny.”

“I was. How’s she doing?”

“Lyra?” Lily asked. “She’s doing really great. She has a few nightmares but they are mostly of her changing and it scares her. She has others too ... but ... from what I gathered from Remus and through what he’s discovered from Jason, Mario, and Ryan, the other kids who were there, Lyra hid most of the time and stayed out of the way. She wasn’t there very long.”

Harry nodded. “Ginny mentioned something earlier, something I didn’t even notice but, Lyra doesn’t go around most females. I mean, she’s clingy to you, Mum, but she won’t go around anyone else.”

Lily nodded. “She goes around Lexy. I think she was drawn to her because she’s pregnant. She’s always asking me questions about the baby in my tummy. She loves the baby and she loves Lexy’s baby. She doesn’t seem to trust anyone else. She’s hesitant around Tonks and still clings to Remus from time to time but she’s getting better.”

“I think some of the women in the caves abused her a bit. Remus mentioned this one woman who was particularly aggressive Diana Borderland? Well, she seemed to always be glaring at her and calling her names. Remus doesn’t know if she ever hurt her in any way but it doesn’t take much to abuse a child.” James replied.

“I think it was her mother personally.” Lily answered. “She dreams in the night and she calls out for her mother and then she cries and begs her mum not to leave her alone and says that she’s not evil. She’s not bad. She cries out that the bad man hurt her and cries and cries. When she wakes up she snuggles into my embrace and tells me that her other mummy doesn’t love her.”

Harry nodded. “Poor kid. The bad man I would assume is Greyback, right?”

James nodded. “Yeah. Lily and I need to talk to you actually. Draco,

too, as he's part of this family now. We're going to go put Lyra to bed then will you meet us in our room?"

"Yeah."

Harry watched his parents go, wondering what they had to talk to him about. It was hard to believe that Lily was already four months pregnant. She didn't have a stomach yet, not really, though he assumed if you looked closely one could see it. He headed back over to the other side of the room where Molly and Arthur were still discussing wedding plans with Bill and Fleur as well as possible ideas for Fred and Angelina.

"Draco?"

Draco turned around to glance at Harry. "Yeah?"

"Mum and Da want to talk to us about something, come on."

Draco looked surprised at this. "Um, okay." Once they were on their way upstairs, Draco spoke. "What do they want?"

Harry laughed. "To talk about something. You're part of the family now and they're not going to leave you out. Alright, Uncle Draco?"

He laughed. "I like the sound of that. I mean, I wasn't sure that I would but ... I'd much rather be an uncle than a brother."

Harry grinned. "I'm glad to be a brother. I always wanted siblings when I was younger."

They stepped into the master bedroom and Harry stretched out on the bed as Draco took a seat in a nearby chair. It was only a few moments before James came in.

"Hey, Lily's just tucking her in." He took a seat on the bed as well and leaned back against the headboard.

Lily came in a moment later. "She's fast asleep."

“Good.” James replied. “Alright, now I know that you’re both probably wondering why we asked you to come in here. Well, Harry brought up a good point earlier about Lyra being wary of females. Draco, we explained to Harry that it’s most likely because her mother abandoned her when she was bitten. However, there’s something very serious to discuss. We haven’t told Remus yet and, hell, I don’t even know how we’re going to do it.”

“What’s going on, Da? How does it concern Lyra?” Harry asked.

Draco nodded. “Yeah. She’s beautiful and sweet, is something wrong?”

Lily took a seat next to Draco and gently ran her hand over his arm. “No, nothings wrong with her. It’s something wrong that happened to her.”

James nodded. “After Remus was better and we worked out the custody case, we brought her into St. Mungo’s for an examination. We wanted to make sure that she was healthy and that she wasn’t injured in any way from living down there with the other werewolves. We informed the healer who looked at her of her condition as well, so that she was prepared when she examined her.” His fists clenched angrily at his sides when he spoke. “She was ... she was bloody violated. I don’t know when and I don’t know by who or how many times. But the evidence was there.”

Lily nodded, tears rolling down her cheeks. “She cries in the middle of the night. She didn’t understand it, of course, she’s too young, but to think that ... that someone damaged that little girl like that makes me sick.”

“Greyback?” Harry asked, his eyes flashing in a similar fashion to James’.

“I don’t know. I’ve never heard of anything like this by him before. And Greyback is known for his cruelty.”

Draco swallowed. “Death Eaters?”

Lily shook her head as she took his hand in hers. "No, sweetheart, I don't think so. The one thing Greyback is good for is protecting his own. She's an innocent little child and he wouldn't have let Death Eaters near her."

"What about the other men there? Other werewolves?" Draco demanded. "Was it one of them?"

James shrugged. "We don't know and we might never know the answer. The only thing that I do know is that if I ever find the sick SOB that did this I'm going to rip him apart." He closed his eyes for a moment. "To think he hurt my baby girl makes me more than disgusted."

"I'll help you, Da." Harry replied. "No one should be able to ... Merlin ... she's alright, otherwise?"

Lily nodded. "Nightmares haunt her often but we can calm her down. She ends up in bed with us a lot." She smiled. "Harry, you know the way your father sleeps, well, Lyra always wakes up giggling because James is in some weird position."

James grinned. "But then she snuggles close, her face over my heart and it's alright. She doesn't remember her nightmares the next day. They don't plague her in any way other than at night. We're hoping in time that the memory will fade and won't continue to haunt her."

"I don't know what I expected you to tell us, but this wasn't it," Harry murmured.

Draco nodded. "Yeah, me neither. I don't even know what to say."

"There's nothing to say," Lily replied. "James and I just wanted you both to be aware of the trauma that she went through. She's a fun, sweet, and innocently trusting little girl but at the same time she's very withdrawn. She's taken to living here with us quite well. James and I told her about the baby a few days ago."

Harry grinned. "Oh yeah? How did she take that?"  
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"She was happy," James replied. "Stated that she always wanted a little sister."

"Sister?" Harry asked with a grin. "We're having a girl?"

Lily laughed. "I love the 'we're' as I'm pretty sure it's just me giving birth. But yes, it's a girl."

Harry let out a whoop of joy and jumped off the bed to swing Lily around. "YES!"

She laughed. "Put me down!" When he placed her back on her feet she kissed his cheeks. "A little girl."

"With Lily's hair hopefully." James added. "I unfortunately passed onto you my rat's nest."

Harry snorted. "Yeah, I noticed."

Draco grinned. "Congratulations, a girl Potter, scary thought."

"Well, the second girl Potter, as Lyra is the first." James replied. "But thanks. Are you still going to take the title of honorary uncle?"

Draco grinned. "Damn straight, I agree with what you said in the hospital wing. Honorary uncle is the safer route."

Lily smiled and kissed his cheek. "It's completely your choice."

He nodded. "I know." He wrapped his arms around her and hugged her close before he kissed her cheek. "Thank you."

James grinned and his arm fell around Harry's shoulders as he leaned in to whisper. "Now she's going to be a basket case."

Harry laughed. "She's just happy."

He nodded. "Yeah, me too." He kissed the top of his son's head. "Alright, let's head downstairs and rejoin the party eh?"

“Good plan.”

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As for *Weasleys Wizard Wheezes*, the shop was still closed and George and Katie were still inside. Both of them had progressed to silently glaring at the other one. Katie still wasn't sure what she was still doing there. Dumbledore had given her permission to go out with Angelina since they were together on something for the Order and she knew that she was supposed to be spending Easter with her family. Instead she was locked in the store with the one person she wanted most. She twisted her engagement band around her finger and she heard him make a growling noise.

“Alright! Fred and Angie have been gone for over an hour and you've barely said anything! You wanted to talk!” Katie demanded. “Some friend you are!”

George glared at her. “What's that supposed to mean, Katie? Eh?”

She shrugged. “I don't know! You tell me! I thought that we were friends and obviously I was wrong because a friend would congratulate me on getting engaged. Darren Murphy is a wonderful man!”

George snorted. “Well bloody congratu-fucking-lations! Happy now?”

“What is your problem, George? I don't understand! I've never understood you!”

His hands clenched into fists. “You're supposed to ... damn it, Kat, he's not good for you!”

She softened at the nickname. He was the only one who had ever called her that. He used to use it as a teasing device and he called her a pussy-Kat. She used to get angry, she remembered. “Why not? You don't even know him, George.”

“Because I just know! Damn it ... this wasn't supposed to happen!”

“What wasn’t supposed to happen?” She demanded. “I don’t understand you at all!”

George groaned and buried his face in his hands. “It was supposed to be me, Katie! Me! I was waiting like a goddamn good little boy, just waiting for you to finish school.”

“What?”

He stomped over to her and yanked her up against him. “Me. The first time I saw you, pushing your glasses up your nose as you tried to tidy that wet mop on your head from the rain as you took a seat the table. You asked me to pass the salt. Me. When I asked you to the Yule Ball I thought that this was the moment when I could get over this stupid, dumb crush and claim that I didn’t fancy you. But then I kissed you. I don’t know what the hell possessed me to do it but when my lips touched yours I felt like I was home. Me, Katie. It scared the crap out of me. I was sixteen and I just thought ... I shouldn’t be feeling this. But I knew at that moment there would never be anyone else. You. But the emotions running through me were too much, they scared me. I dumped you because ... because I was a jerk, okay? Even when I wanted you back, I thought that you’d never take me. I had nothing to offer you. But now I have a great job and I have money and I was waiting until you graduated and then I was going to ... I was going to ask you to be my girlfriend.”

His head reeled back from the shock of the slap. Tears were pouring down her cheeks. “How dare you tell me this? I’m getting married in the summer, George! I’m getting married! You lost your chance with me!”

“No, Kat! Please, don’t say I’ve ruined it.” He begged, falling to his knees in front of her. “I’m a jerk I know it and I’m sorry ... but I just ... I can’t let you marry this guy, not without giving me a chance.” He took her hands in his and kissed them. “Do you love me, Katie?”

Her bottom lip trembled as tears poured down her cheeks. “I love Darren, too.” She ripped her hands out of his grip and ran out of the store.

George sat there for a moment watching her go and then he shook his head. No, he was not going to lose her, not without a fight. He climbed to his feet and he ran out after her into the rain. He managed to catch up with her in a corner alleyway and he pinned her back against the wall.

“Kat, just give me a chance.”

She shook her head. “I can’t! The last time I gave you a chance you broke my heart!”

“Baby, I didn’t mean to.” He tilted her chin towards him, pleased that when she was in her heels they stood eye to eye. “Please give me another chance.” Then he brought his mouth to hers.

She didn’t respond at first but then she was pouring herself into the kiss with everything she had. He held her close as he tasted her and just like it had three years before, he felt weak in the knees. He felt like he was home. He felt what he had been missing most of his life. He pulled her closer as they kissed, the rain pouring down on them and the lightening flashing. A loud clap of thunder broke them apart.

“Let’s go back to the shop, get into some dry clothes?” He suggested.

Katie nodded as she followed him out. Once they were upstairs in the apartment he gave her a pair of sweatpants and a sweater to put on and she went into the bathroom to change. She came out, turning the ring on her finger as George watched her.

“Me or him, Kat, who is it going to be?”

Her brown eyes met his brown ones and she grinned. “It’s always been you, George.”

He grinned and yanked her into his arms for another kiss. “Good.”

“George, do you love me?”

“More than anything. Kat ... you won’t regret this, I promise. I love you, Katie. I’m sorry that it took me so long to realize it. I’m sorry that

I pushed you away. I'm so sorry, for everything."

She smiled and reached up to kiss him. "I love you too."

He grinned as she kissed the tip of his nose. "Do you think Fred and Angie expected this to happen?"

Katie laughed. "Without a doubt."

"Thought as much." He ran his fingers over her bangs gently. "Will you stay here with me tonight? We'll only sleep, I swear."

She smiled. "Yes."

George grinned. "Who is this Darren guy, by the way? Do I know him?"

Katie blushed and bit her bottom lip. "Probably not."

"Why?"

"Because he's a fictional character of Angie's imagination."

"WHAT?" George exclaimed. "So you're not engaged?"

Katie shook her head as she giggled. "No. Angelina had this idea that if you knew I was engaged to someone else you would smarten up. Fred agreed. Personally, I think I should get an award for that performance."

"Well ... that's ... that's ... damn it, they were right!"

She laughed and kissed him softly. "Now you're stuck with me, too. I know how you really feel."

He sighed and cuddled her into his arms. "That's alright, there's no where else I'd rather be and no one else I'd rather be stuck with."

She smiled as she cuddled into him. "Good."

\*\*\*\*\*

Sirius finally managed to break away from the large group of people around midnight. His arm was wrapped around Lexy as they headed into the entrance hall. "So do you think that we could finish where we left off?"

She laughed. "I suppose."

"You suppose?" He asked. "Lex what's wrong?"

She shrugged. "Nothing I just ... I was watching Molly and Arthur in there, planning their children's weddings and it reminded me of my parents. I wish that they would move closer."

Sirius sighed. "I know I've been trying to get them to. Garrett won't listen to reason. They had all those attacks in a nearby town and Julianna was a little worried but Garrett keeps telling me that they've lived in that house for thirty-two years and nothing has happened. He says that they're perfectly safe."

"But you don't think so, do you?" she whispered.

"Lex, I love you, but yes, I'm damn worried about them. I even had Lily go over and talk to them and try to convince them to move into the manor. They refused. Then I played the pregnant card. Told them that you needed them here. You were having a baby for the first time and that you needed your parents for moral support. Garrett told me it was a crock of bull and if I didn't leave them be he'd punch me in the face, again." Sirius explained.

Lexy nodded. "Sirius, for the last few weeks now, every time I've thought about my parents I've been worried. I know I'm stressing over the fact that they won't listen and it's not good for the baby. Poppy told me that if I don't stop stressing I could ... I could hurt the baby."

Sirius scooped her up into his arms and carried her into the bedroom. "You won't hurt the baby. But you do need to stop stressing. I'm going down to their house tomorrow, and I'm going to force them to move out if I have to stun them and carry their unconscious bodies to a

secure location.”

She laughed. “Daddy will kill you.”

He grinned. “It’s a risk I’ll take. Do you feel better now?”

She nodded. “Yeah. Thank you for trying to take care of my stubborn parents.”

“Well, at least I know where you get it from.”

She laughed and kissed him softly. “Yeah.”

He sat her down on the edge of the bed and he watched as she tried to rub the balls of her feet. It was getting hard for her to reach them. He grinned and sat down, pulling her feet up into his lap. Using his thumb, he rubbed the balls of her feet and along the arch and she sighed in pleasure.

“Mmm, thanks. They hurt so much.”

He grinned. “No problem. Lexy, I’ve been thinking.”

“Hmm?” She asked.

“Well, our daughter’s due in a little less than three months and we still don’t have a name for her yet.”

Lexy nodded. “I know. I’ve been thinking about it.”

“You’re still against Bunty and Eugenia, eh?”

She laughed. “Yes. Sirius, what do you think of the name Keira?”

Sirius looked thoughtful for a moment. “Keira, that’s kind of pretty. Where did you come up with that one?”

She shrugged. “No where particular I just heard it and I liked it. Keira Black.”

He grinned. "I like that. Keira Black."

Lexy smiled as he moved onto her other foot. "So now we just need to decide on a middle name."

"Keira Ginevra Black." Sirius replied.

Lexy smiled. "You read my mind. Ginny is one of the most important people in the world to you. I think for that alone she deserves godmother status and middle name status."

Sirius laughed. "Me too. Keira." He moved on the bed so that he could place a hand over her stomach. "What do you think of that honey? You alright with being my little Princess Keira?"

The baby kicked and Lexy laughed. "I'd say she agrees."

He grinned. "Good." Then he leaned in to kiss her softly. The soft kiss turned passionate quickly and he made a growling sound in his throat. "I want you."

She smiled and slid her hands into his thick mane of hair. "So, what are you waiting for?"

He grinned and began to unbutton her blouse. "Absolutely nothing." Then he crushed his mouth to hers.

\*\*\*\*\*

Ginny waited for everyone to go to bed so that she could talk to Bill. Considering how many people were in the house it was close to one thirty in the morning by the time she got around to it. She heard the knock on her bedroom door and she grinned at her brother when he stepped inside. She was curled up on the small loveseat with Foolish's head resting in her lap. Midnight was lounging the middle of the bed giving the dog jealous glares. Foolish was getting old and she knew it so she thought he deserved extra attention when they were there.

"Hey Firefly." He leaned down to kiss her forehead before he took a



seat in a nearby chair. "He looks cozy."

She smiled. "He is. Foolish here loves me, don't you boy?" She scratched him behind the ears and his eyes closed happily.

"So what's up, Gin? Everything alright with you and Harry?"

She nodded. "Yeah, everything's fine. I just ... Harry says that I should talk to you and I know he's right. You're probably just going to think I'm stupid but I —"

"Hey, Firefly, nothing you think is stupid. Now tell me what's going on?" Bill demanded, moving to sit next to her and to plop Foolish's butt in his lap.

Ginny sighed. "It's just ... you're getting married."

He grinned and slipped his arm around her shoulders. "I know. Scary thought, eh? Don't you like Fleur?"

Ginny made a face and he laughed. "I don't really know her but leave it to you to pick the most perfectly beautiful woman in the world!"

He laughed. "It wasn't intentional. She's gorgeous and I like her. She's rude and impatient and loving and sweet and she has no qualms about telling me to piss off. At the same time she likes me because I love her for herself. I'm not acting stupid around her because of her Veela charms. But trust me when she turns that on you're in trouble."

She grinned. "It sounds like you really love her."

He nodded. "I do. What is it, Gin?"

She sighed and leaned into him. "I just ... I'm closer to you than I am to anyone else. Even Charlie, and you know it. But I just ... she's going to take you away from me."

"Oh, honey, no." He pulled her close and kissed her forehead. "Ginny, you're my best girl, you know that. I'll always be here when you need

me. Fleur could never take that away and if she wanted to she wouldn't be the person that I fell in love with."

Tears rolled down Ginny's cheeks as she sniffed. "I told you that I was being stupid. Harry said the same thing but I just ... I can't help it!"

Bill laughed and Foolish jumped down onto the floor as he moved in to wipe the tears off her cheeks. "Firefly, look at you, I've never known you to cry over anything so silly. You are my favourite person in the entire world. Ever since I sat on the edge of the bed and Mum placed you in my arms. I was thirteen years old and I was madly in love with you."

She sniffed and cuddled into his arms. "When you get married do you promise that we'll still do stuff together?"

"What kind of stuff?"

She shrugged as she wiped tears from her eyes. "I don't know. But remember how when you came home from Egypt you used to always take me out to lunch or we'd go shopping or something. Can we still do that?"

He kissed her cheek. "Always. We'll make a date. I promise."

She nodded. "I'm being dumb."

"No, you're not, but I'm glad that Harry made you talk to me. I had no idea that you were having any of these concerns. Honey, you're not going to lose me. Okay?" Bill replied.

"Alright."

She hugged him close again as Midnight jumped into her lap. "Firefly? I think that you should talk to Fleur, get to know her a bit. She knows how important you are to me. Gabby is her life, she and her sister are very close. She understands how I feel about you. Alright?"

She nodded. "Alright."

Bill kissed her forehead. "Good." He stretched out a bit, putting his long legs almost at the end of the bed. "Now, talk."

Ginny laughed as she rubbed Midnight's tummy. "About what?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. Just talk. How's life with Harry?"

She grinned. "Good. I love him so much. He's my world. He said today that he can't picture his life without me and that he'd like to marry me some day."

"Wow, that's big step, but then again, not really. You guys have been together almost two years."

She nodded. "Yeah. He's so sweet and he doesn't pressure me into doing anything. It's my choice, what I want when I want it, no questions asked." She bit her lip nervously before she spoke. She knew that Bill had always been the one to answer her questions on sex but still. "Like sex, for example."

He paled slightly. "Christ! I wish I could say that you're much too young but I was thirteen so ... you haven't, have you?"

"No, not yet. He doesn't pressure me, Bill, at all. I mean, it's there, I can see it in his eyes that he's so sexually frustrated but I ... well, I help him out when I can."

"Gin! Love you to death, but that's way too many details."

She laughed and kissed his cheek. "I just wanted to see your face. I think I'm ready though. I'm just waiting for the right moment."

Bill took her hand in his and smiled. "That's your decision and no one can make that choice for you. He's a great guy and he has a lot on his shoulders. I think he could use a sweaty roll. Don't make the guy suffer too much, eh?"

"A sweaty roll? Oh, how did Fleur resist your charms?"

He laughed. "Brat! Speaking of charms, I think I'm going to go sneak into my fiancée's room." He kissed her cheek. "Everything alright between us?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah. Thanks."

"I love you, Firefly, don't forget that." He kissed her forehead and pulled her close for a hug. "You could never lose me. Goodnight."

Ginny watched him go with a grin on her face. She had been foolish and she knew it but she still felt better to hear him say it. She was just about to crawl into bed when there was another knock at her door. She pulled it open and grinned at Harry. "What are you doing here?"

He slipped his arms around her and kissed her deeply. "I was told you needed me."

She laughed. "By who?"

"Bill. He said you two talked? Are you okay?"

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, I'm fine. I was being stupid, I know it, but ... I just had to know."

Harry nodded. "I know." He kissed her again this time more deeply. "Alright, I'm going back to my own room now."

She laughed and kissed him softly. "That's probably a good idea. I'll see you in the morning." Her lips met his again and he groaned.

"Right, I'm going. Goodnight, Gin."

She smiled as she closed the door. "Goodnight."

\*\*\*\*\*

Sirius woke up early the next morning with Lexy wrapped around him. He grinned and leaned over to kiss her softly. She moaned and snuggled closer making him grin.

“Alright babe, I’m getting up. I’m going to head to your parents’ house.”

She opened her eyes and smiled up at him. “Thank you for doing this for me.”

He kissed her deeply. “You’re welcome. I’ll be in the shower if you find you’re up for any water games.”

She laughed and patted his butt playfully as he climbed out of bed. She watched him head into the bathroom naked and she sighed. The man was incredibly gorgeous. She snuggled back under the covers and closed her eyes within seconds she was sound asleep again.

Sirius stepped out of the shower and he got dressed and dried his hair. He grinned at her when he saw her sleeping soundly. He wrote a quick note and placed it on the pillow along with a red rose that he conjured. He hoped it made her smile when she woke up.

He had just stepped into the kitchen hoping for a quick bite to eat when James entered. “Morning.”

Sirius nodded. “Hey.”

“Going to see the O’Bryans today?” James asked.

Sirius nodded. “I can’t put it off. This thing is stressing Lex out and it’s not good for the baby.”

“Want me to go with you?”

“No, I’m alright.” He replied. “I’m hoping it doesn’t take too long but considering I might have to stun them, you never know.”

James laughed. “Good luck, mate.”

He reached over and grabbed a piece of toast from James’ plate. “See you.”

He Disapparated from the entrance hall and landed outside of the door. He froze instantly. The Dark Mark was fluttering over the roof of the house. Before he could move he was sucked back into the memory.

*He had stumbled into the house, his heart pounding as the Dark Mark floated above Godric's Hollow.*

*"Hagrid, what happened? I went to check... he was gone and now..." He looked over and saw James in the hallway. "No!" He rushed forward, shaking his friend. The shaking became more desperate when he felt no pulse. "James, come on, you can't be dead, come on, James, wake up! PRONGS!"*

*"Sirius!" Hagrid said, tears pouring down his face, pulling him away from James. "You're too late. Lily's gone too, she's upstairs in the nursery. There's only 'Arry now."*

*"Siri!" Harry exclaimed, holding out his arms.*

*Sirius looked up at Hagrid and then over at Harry, tears rolling down his face. "Give him to me, Hagrid, I'm his godfather, Harry's my responsibility now."*

*Hagrid shook his head as he placed a comforting hand on Sirius' shoulder as Sirius cried. "I can't, I've got Dumbledore's orders to take him to his muggle aunt and uncle's house. Petunia Dursley is his godmother, is she not?"*

*He nodded weakly. "Can I just... can I say goodbye to him then?"*

*Hagrid nodded and placed Harry into his arms.*

*"Siri!" Harry said, grabbing a fistful of his hair.*

*Sirius nodded, holding Harry close as he kissed his cheeks and his forehead. "I love you, Harry. You're going to go live with your aunt and uncle. They'll take good care of you."*

*"Da!" Harry said, pointing over at James.*

*Sirius shook his head as he sobbed, burying his face into Harry's neck. "No Da, Harry."*

*"Mumma!"*

*"No Mumma."*

*"Siri!" Harry replied, as he rubbed at his eyes, blood was beginning to drip in his eyes from the cut. He knew something was wrong, even as a small child he knew.*

*Sirius ripped his shirt and gently dabbed at it until the bleeding stopped. "Goodbye, Harry, go with Hagrid now." He kissed Harry again and then he placed him in Hagrid's arms as Harry began to cry again, this time for Sirius. "Take my bike, Hagrid. If I don't have to look after Harry, there's something else that I have to do." He kissed Harry on the head and walked out of the house without a backwards glance as Harry desperately called out to him.*

He came back to himself quickly, his heart pounding. It had all been a terrible nightmare. Lily and James were still alive. He rushed into the house and stopped cold when he saw Bella standing there.

"Well, well, if it isn't my dear cousin. Looks like you may have nine lives."

Sirius gulped. Julianna was lying on the floor, her arm was bleeding and her wand was broken. Garrett had his wand out and pointed at Bella but she had her wand pointed at his wife and Sirius could see the fear in his eyes. "Bella, come on now, why are you here? Why don't you come after me? I'm the one who got everything. I inherited the Black fortune, what did you get?"

"You bastard!" She shrieked. "Do you think money means anything to me? I will have riches and wealth galore once the Dark Lord triumphs! These insignificant fools will have what? A half-blood grandchild? Oh, wait ... they don't care as their daughter is a half-blood! Look at the Mudblood trying to protect his wife."

Sirius could see Garrett's eyes darting down to his wife. "Bella, come on, what have you got to prove here? Why would Voldemort send you on such a stupid trip? It's a waste of your talents."

"Hardly. I chose to come here. Take out what's important to you. We'll call it my own personal revenge. You should have died last year when you fell through that veil!" She grimaced as if remembering her failure. "Alright Sirius, here's the choice. You join with me or they die."

"You think I'm stupid enough to fall for that? No matter which one I choose you're going to kill them!"

Bella laughed. "Well, well, getting smarter every year. Alright." She muttered an anti-apparating spell and then she blasted a hole in the ceiling as the house began to shake. She muttered another spell that Sirius didn't hear. "If you can get them out alive, you win. You've got five minutes before this entire dump blows up like a rocket! Buh-bye!"

She pulled a portkey out from her pocket and disappeared.

"Garrett, get over here!" Sirius demanded as he tried to make his way towards his father-in-law. Chunks of plaster and wood were falling as the house shook and crumbled around them.

"I can't leave Julia, help me get her up!"

Sirius stumbled over there and reached over to grab her just as a thin piece of wood speared right into her back. She shrieked.

"Baby!" Garrett murmured.

"Shit! It just missed the heart, but she's bleeding badly. I don't know any damn healing spells!"

Garrett shook his head. "None of them would work. Help me get her up."

A loud bang erupted from the front door and Sirius could see the explosion. It was like a bomb going off. "What kind of spell did she use? Come on!" Sirius had Julia cradled in his arms as Garrett



stumbled behind him. "Damn it, Garrett, let's go, this place is collapsing around us we don't have time to stop for even a second!"

Another explosion hit and this time there was a huge metal pipe that burst from the wall. Sirius heard the loud intake of breath and when he turned to look at his father-in-law, Garrett's eyes glassed over almost instantly.

"Shit, shit, Garrett, come on now! This can't be happening!"

Blood was dripping from his mouth. "Take ... Ju ..."

He trailed off and Sirius froze. He knew that he was dead but still he stepped forward, checked for a pulse and got his blood smeared all over him. He didn't move for over a minute until Julianna stirred in his arms and then he began to run. Small explosions continued to rumble throughout the house and when he finally managed to get outside he had cuts and scrapes on his arms and legs and Garrett's blood on his hands. Julianna was barely breathing when he Disapparated straight to St. Mungo's.

He was still shaking as the healers insisted on checking him over as well. He was covered in blood but very little of it was actually his own. He dragged his hand over his face after they cleaned him up. He knew he had to contact Lexy, but he couldn't find it in his heart to do it. He couldn't bring his feet to move. He simply stared at the healer when he walked out, holding the bloody stick in his hands.

"Mr. Black? I'm sorry, but she was gone when she hit the table. There was nothing we could do."

He nodded. There was nothing he could do. He just stood there blankly staring at the healer. He wasn't sure how long he stood there but soon Dumbledore was standing in front of him.

"Sirius? Come with me, now."

He felt himself be dragged away and only when he was seated in Dumbledore's office and Poppy shoved a calming draught down his throat did he focus.

“Sirius, what happened?”

“I ... I went to get Garrett and Julia ... Lex and I didn't think they were safe there. That town has been attacked a few times. They refused to come. I was going to drag them, stun them if I had too ... Bella was there. She ... I don't know she did some sort of spell and the house was collapsing and exploding around us. It sounded like damn bombs going off. Garrett was ... a pipe came out of the wall and it went right through ... Merlin he was dead almost right away. Julia ... a ... wood fell and hit her, it missed the heart. I got her out ... but the healers said ... she was gone.” He murmured.

Dumbledore nodded. “Yes, I'm sorry, Sirius. I know you tried to save her. Do you know why Bella was there, Sirius?”

“Because of me. She wanted to punish me. I didn't die when she tried to kill me. Lex saved me. Also I didn't marry a pureblood and now she's pregnant. It was petty revenge nothing more.” He buried his face in his hands. “How the hell am I going to tell her, Albus? Poppy said no more stress for her. It could damage her and the baby.”

“Yes, it very well could. But Sirius, you have to tell her.”

He nodded. “I know. I'm going right now.”

Dumbledore watched him enter the floo, he was still covered in blood and his clothes were torn. He hoped that the news didn't hurt the baby.

When Sirius stepped into the entrance hall, Lily gasped. She was coming down the stairs with Lyra when she saw him.

“Sirius! What happened? Are you alright?”

He nodded. “Yeah, I ... where's Lexy?”

“She's in the dining room with everyone else. Sirius, what's going on?”

He simply shook his head and walked into the dining room. The entire room went silent when he walked in. Lexy's eyes widened when she saw him.

"Sirius!" She jumped to her feet and hurried towards him. The only thing she could focus on was his bloody, torn clothes. "Are you alright? Oh, honey, what happened?"

He took her hands in hers and held them to his cheek for a moment. "Honey, I think you should sit down."

Lexy's eyes narrowed. Her hands shook a bit as she looked behind him, noticing Lily standing there with Lyra in her arms. "Sit down. Sirius, you tell me what's wrong? Where are my parents?"

Sirius closed his eyes for a moment. He could feel everyone staring at him. "Lex, I went to their cottage. Bellatrix was there."

She shook her head as a feeling of dread pooled itself in the pit of her stomach. "No, no, she wouldn't be there."

"Julia was injured and her wand was broken but Garrett was still fighting."

"No! No, why are you telling me this? Don't lie to me!" She shrieked, tears were pouring down her cheeks. She wiped at them furiously as her heart pounded in her chest. Why was he telling her this? She placed a protective hand over her stomach when she felt a small pain zip through her as her heart rate accelerated.

"I tried to stop her. I thought I could. I ... she cast some sort of explosion or something. She said that I had five minutes to get them out of the house. It was like bombs were going off."

Lexy shook her head furiously as she began to hyperventilate. She couldn't catch her breath. She could feel her heart pounding and her voice seemed to be caught in her throat. "No, no!" She put a hand to her stomach as a cramp shot through her. "Sirius, no."

"Baby, I tried but the house was collapsing. Garrett didn't make it out

but I got Julia to St. Mungo's. I'm sorry, baby, but she didn't make it."

"NO!" Lexy screamed. She beat at his chest with her fists as tears were pouring down her cheeks. "No! No! No! I don't believe you! It's not true!" Her brain was feeling dizzy and she was feeling slightly out of sorts then she felt another cramp shoot through her system. She grabbed her stomach at the pain but soon she felt the liquid trickling down her legs. "No, no, no ouch! OH!"

Sirius caught her as she started to collapse forward, her eyes wide and fearful. "Baby, baby what is it?" He asked, running his fingers through her hair. "Lex, come on now. ALEXIS!"

"Get her to Poppy, now." Molly exclaimed, standing up as she noticed the blood coming from her.

Sirius' eyes widened as Lexy noticed the blood and then her eyes rolled back in her head and she collapsed in his arms. "She's ... why is she bleeding like that?"

Molly placed a hand on his shoulder as Arthur made a portkey. "It's the baby, Sirius."

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## Chapter 84: Baby and Bounty

**Author's Notes:** Wow i must really love u guys - posting a new chapter on my 20th birthday - whew! lol  
j/k i just got it back today  
tho i do love u  
thanks to those who helped - u kno who u are!  
plz review:D

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## Chapter Eighty-Four — Baby and Bounty

Sirius was visibly shaking when he lowered Lexy down to the hospital

bed. James and Remus were there now, too, they pulled him back so that Madam Pomfrey could look at her.

"Molly was wrong, right?" He whispered as James and Remus held his arms.

Lily, Tonks, Harry, and Ginny rushed into the room next. Ginny walked right over and pulled Sirius into her arms. That was all it took, he broke down. His arms tightened around Ginny as he cried and she held him in her arms. James and Remus each had a comforting hand on his shoulders but it wasn't what he needed right now. He closed his eyes as the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Is this my fault? I didn't want ... is it because I didn't want the baby at first?"

"No," Ginny murmured. "It's not your fault." She rubbed his back, hoping that it would soothe him.

Sirius didn't know what he felt. Molly had to be wrong. There was no way that he and Lex were going to lose this baby. How would he ... he hadn't wanted the baby at first. The idea had scared him out of his wits and he had said no. But now ... he wanted this baby so much. He was afraid of losing his daughter and his wife. He closed his eyes and breathed in Ginny's scent. She was what he needed. She was that one friend other than the marauders that knew him inside and out. She understood him and she had that empath thing. He knew she was using it on him now because he could feel the warmth of the power running through him. She was offering him comfort in more than one way. He turned to kiss her cheek and pulled himself together.

"I need ... I need to be with my wife." Sirius pushed away from them and went behind the curtain.

Ginny reached over to take Harry's hand in hers. "Do you think that she'll be alright?"

"I don't know." He replied honestly. None of them knew what to say.

Sirius closed the privacy curtain around him and sat down on the edge of the bed, taking Lexy's hand in his. She looked so pale sitting there. Madam Pomfrey had taken off her trousers and he could see the blood on her stomach and around her thighs. She was still out cold and her hair was matted to her face from the sweat. He brought her hand to his lips. "Poppy?"

Madam Pomfrey held up her hand. "Not now. She's lost a lot of blood."

"Can you ... I mean ... can you save the baby?"

Madam Pomfrey's eyes met Sirius'. "I don't know. But I'm sure as hell going to try."

Sirius watched her work as she gave Lexy some potions and worked to try to stop the bleeding. Then she took a gel like lotion and rubbed it on her belly using her wand to project an image of the baby on the wall. He heard her sigh in relief. It felt like hours watching her work though it really had only been about twenty minutes.

"She's fine, Sirius. It was a big shock and a close call. But the baby's fine. A little shaken, but she's okay. We'll have to make sure she gets some potions and things because of the blood loss, but she's alright."

Sirius grinned. "And Lex?"

Madam Pomfrey smiled. "She's just fine too. Something huge must have set her off like this. I know that she's been extremely worried about a lot of things. I've told her that a lot of stress can be harmful to the baby. Do you know what might have caused this?"

He nodded. "Yeah. She's been worried about her parents."

"I know she's mentioned it. I believe they've refused to move closer and seem to think they will be safe where they are. Lexy disagreed strongly and was stressing herself out over it. She was worried about their safety and about them in general. She also desperately wanted them near her during the pregnancy. I think she was particularly missing her mother. Did something happen with her parents?"

Madam Pomfrey asked.

Sirius nodded, chewing his bottom lip softly as his eyes darted down to his wife. "I went to go get them today. I planned to drag them to safety. If I had to stun them first then so be it. Lexy knew I planned on it and I went there ... there was ... well a Death Eater and ... I tried to save them but I was too late. I had to break the news to her."

Madam Pomfrey sighed. "Oh, the poor dear. To lose both of her parents and ... I'm taking that that was what caused the collapse?"

"Aye. She didn't believe me. She was crying and calling me a liar and ... then she started clutching her stomach and there was blood and then she saw there was blood and then she passed out. Molly said that it was the baby so I rushed her here."

"You did the right thing. It was just too much for her with all of the stress. It's a tragedy about her parents and naturally it affected her in a very negative impact. However, it also affected the baby. But she's going to be fine, Sirius, so you don't have to worry."

He nodded. "Good. When will she wake up?"

Madam Pomfrey smiled. "Soon I suspect, but I'm going to give her a potion to help her rest a bit longer. She needs a good night's sleep. She's also going to have to make some serious adjustments that you need to be prepared for."

"Like what?" He asked, as he rubbed his thumb over the back of her hand.

"She's going to need rest, a lot of rest. I'm putting her on bed rest."

"Bed rest?" Sirius asked. "What's that?"

"It means that she has to stay in bed. She must not get up at all for any reason other than to go to the bathroom. Someone else will have to cover her classes."

He nodded. "Got it. I'll make sure that she's well-taken care of. How

long does this bed rest thing have to go on for?"

"Until she has the baby."

Sirius gulped. "She's definitely not going to like that."

Madam Pomfrey laughed. "No I imagine she won't. She's going to get very frustrated but it's the best thing for the baby."

"Alright."

"I'm going to give her a sleeping potion so that she will rest for a while. Then, when she wakes, up we'll discuss everything, alright?"

Sirius nodded. "Alright. I'll stay here."

She looked like she wanted to argue and then she sighed. "Fine, but she needs to rest."

"I know." He stood up and slid a chair over so that he could curl into it. Then he took Lexy's hand again. "I'll be good, Poppy."

Madam Pomfrey smirked. "You'll never change. I'm going to go get those potions for Lexy."

He nodded as he watched her go. He brushed her hair out of her eyes and leaned down to kiss her cheek. "Hey baby, I'm going to be right here the whole time, alright?" He kept his hand in hers as Madam Pomfrey came back and gave Lexy the potions before she left. Then he just sat there, his hand in hers and he watched her sleep.

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Ginny stood up instantly when Madam Pomfrey came out from behind the curtain. She had been rushing in and out with potions and things but now she seemed calmer and less rushed. "Madam Pomfrey?"

Madam Pomfrey smiled, her eyes wandering around to the group of



people. "She's fine. We had a little scare there ... I'm sure you're all aware that she almost lost the baby. I managed to stop the bleeding and give her something for the pain. Sirius has no plans of leaving her side. However, Lexy will be on bed rest for the rest of her pregnancy."

Lily nodded, her hand clutched in James'. "Oh, that's going to be rough on her."

"How's Sirius?" Tonks asked as she rubbed her hand over Remus' arm.

"He's stressed. He's a bit worried about how to tell her about the bed rest when she wakes up as well. He'll be fine though." Madam Pomfrey replied. "Though I do wish that he would take shower and get out of those bloody and torn clothes and maybe let me take a look at him. I understand that he was checked over at St. Mungo's but I would like to make sure that he's alright."

James grinned. "Good luck getting him away from her."

Ginny nodded. "I can talk to him."

Remus nodded. "Yeah, he'd listen to Ginny."

Madam Pomfrey smiled. "Lexy will be out for at least four hours. So please I'd like to make sure that he's alright as well. The last thing she needs is for him to worry himself sick over her."

Ginny nodded and she smiled at Harry as they headed towards Sirius. Harry kept Ginny's hand in his as they walked behind the curtain. Sirius only looked up briefly with a small nod. "Hi."

"Sirius, you look awful."

He shrugged. "I've got more important things to handle at the moment."

Ginny rolled her eyes at Harry before she went over to him. "Let Madam Pomfrey look at you, make sure that you're not hurt and then

go take a shower and get cleaned up.”

Sirius glared at her. “I’m not leaving her. I’m fine.”

“Do you think Lexy needs to see you like this when she wakes up? Go make yourself presentable. Harry and I will sit here with her. Madam Pomfrey says that she won’t wake up for at least four hours.” Ginny insisted. “She won’t even know you’re gone.”

Harry nodded. “You might as well listen to her, Uncle Sirius, our next option is having Da and Uncle Remus physically drag you out.”

He sighed. “Fine. But if she so much as groans I want to know.”

“Promise.” Ginny replied.

Harry watched as Sirius kissed Lexy’s cheek before he left and then he turned to Ginny. “The next few months are going to be more than rough on both of them.”

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Sirius stayed by the bedside for the next few hours. He had to admit that he did feel a lot better now that he was dressed in clean clothes and showered. He continued to kiss her hands and every once in a while he would run his hand over her stomach and tell his daughter how much he loved them both. He couldn’t believe that he had almost lost her. It was more than he could take. More than he had planned on but he already loved that little baby more than anything in the world. He closed his eyes and rested her hand against his cheek for a moment when he felt her stir.

“Lex?” He asked nervously.

She let out a small moan and her eyes fluttered open. “Sirius?”

He grinned. “Hey baby.” He leaned down to kiss her softly and she smiled up at him.

“What happened? Why am I in the hospital wing? Did something —”

She paled instantly. "Mum and Daddy?"

Sirius nodded. "Honey, I'm sorry."

She leaned back against the pillows and closed her eyes but tears still trickled out of them. "They can't be dead! They just can't be!"

Sirius moved to sit up on the edge of the bed. He wrapped his arms around her and held her closely, his hands running up and down her back. "Baby, I'm sorry but they are. I tried to save them, but I was too late."

She shook her head. "No, no Sirius no." She tensed suddenly and her hands fell to her stomach. "The blood? The baby?"

"She's fine. We ... we almost lost her, Lex, but she's fine. Poppy fixed you right up."

"I almost lost ..." She trailed off. "I didn't?"

He shook his head no as he pulled her close. "No honey."

She clung to him for a moment and then she broke. "Daddy ... I want my mum and my daddy. Sirius, no, please, tell me that it's a dream! I need to see them! I need them!"

"Lexy, they're gone I'm sorry, honey, but Bella she —"

"NO! I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! WHY ARE YOU LYING? THEY WOULDN'T ... THEY WERE SO YOUNG! DADDY ALWAYS SAID THAT HE WOULD PROTECT MUM ... SHE WOULD PROTECT HIM! NO, THEY CAN'T BE DEAD! I NEED THEM!" She shrieked. "I NEED THEM HERE WITH ME AND OUR BABY!"

"Lexy—" He began before she started to push him away, he held onto her and she started to hit him with her fists. He grabbed her arms, trying to keep her steady but she flailed at him. "Lex, damn it, listen to me!"

"NO! LET GO OF ME YOU BASTARD! IT'S YOUR FAULT! IT'S

YOUR FAULT THEIR DEAD! SHE WAS YOUR COUSIN!" She cried. "IT WAS YOU SHE WANTED! SHE WANTED YOU DEAD! YOU DIDN'T DIE AND NOW THEY'RE DEAD!" She sobbed. "Now they're dead!"

He could tell that she was more than hysterical and he knew it, even as the words cut deep. He pulled her close to him, ignoring the way that she continued to squirm and push him away. But the more she hit him the tighter he held on. He couldn't imagine what she was going through. He knew that she was horrified about the baby and more grief stricken by her parents. He also knew that she probably hated him because he brought the news.

"Your fault!" She cried. He held her arms as her fists continued to beat against his chest.

"I know, baby." He murmured, his lips brushing her hair. "It's my fault. I'm so sorry."

She was sobbing now and her fists stopped hitting him and instead fisted into his shirt as she held on. Her head was resting against his heart as she cried. He rubbed his hands over her back and murmured pointless words to her until she had cried herself out. He wasn't sure how long they sat like that as she called him a bastard and blamed him in between sobs as he rocked her back and forth but when she finally calmed down and he laid her back down on the bed and expanded the bed for two. He curled up next to her and held her close.

"I love you, Lexy. I want you to remember that."

He kept his arms wrapped around her for a while until Madam Pomfrey came back.

"She's going to be angry at you for a while."

He nodded. "I know."

"I think that you should leave her alone for a while. Give her some time to think. I'd like to talk to her as well about the baby. Why don't

you go for a walk? You could probably use the fresh air.” She suggested.

Sirius glanced down to where Lexy was staring at the wall ahead. “Alright. I love you, Lexy.”

His eyes met hers as he turned to leave and he could see the anger in them. He simply mouthed the words ‘I love you’ and closed the curtain behind him before he put his fingers to his eyes.

“Sirius, you’re doing the right thing.”

He whipped around to look at McGonagall. His eyes were so raw with emotion that her eyes softened. “What are you doing here?”

She smiled at him and took his arm. “Come walk with me.” Once they started walking she turned back to him. “I heard what happened to Lexy’s parents and then I heard about the baby. I came to see how she was doing. The baby is alright?”

Sirius nodded, shoving his hands into his pocket. “Yeah, yeah ... it was a close call. She almost had a miscarriage.”

McGonagall nodded, her eyes filled with concern. “Sirius, listen I overheard what she said to you in there ... the deaths of Garrett and Julianna O’Bryan were not your fault. She’s angry and she blames you because you were there and you were the one who told her. It’s only natural.”

“Minerva ... I love her so much. I can’t ... I can’t be without her, it would kill me! And she’s lying there so helpless and so ... she won’t let me help her.”

“Sirius, I’ve always looked at you with fondness. I was stern with you when you were in school but at the same time I’ve always seen you as very special. What you did in there was exactly right.” She replied as she took his hand in hers and squeezed gently. “You made her hold onto you. You let her yell and cry and hit and throw her tantrum. She needs to get that out. You’re a wonderful husband. I’ve seen the way you dote on her. Alexis is a very lucky woman. You gave her

exactly what she needed no matter how hard it was for you.”

He sighed and dragged a hand up to run over the rough stubble on his face. “She hates me right now.”

McGonagall shook her head. “No, she doesn’t. She’s just angry and confused and she has to throw those feelings somewhere. It’s not your fault.”

Sirius nodded and he turned and to McGonagall’s surprise pulled her into his arms for a hug. “Thank you. I needed to hear that.” He pulled back and smiled at her. “I needed this. I’ve always ... it was always you I went to for advice in school. You’re right, I was special and I went to you for more then most kids did. You were more to me then just my head of my house. I kind of have seen you as a mother-like figure. Especially before Gwen was always hounding me.”

McGonagall smiled. “Gwen Potter was an astounding woman. I know that you saw me as a mother figure. I loved you, James, and Remus almost as much as I hated the three of you. You were very special students. But you especially ... I know your parents were horrible people and I had more than my share of arguments with Walburga Black. That woman made me so angry ... I’m not sure if you were ever aware of this but ... it was me that pushed for you to not go home every summer. Dumbledore disagreed with me often saying that you had to go back to your parents even for a little while and I believe I told him to shove it and that if he refused I would take you home with me. I think he finally came to his senses around the time that Gwen and Andrew took you in every summer.”

Sirius grinned. “Really? That’s sweet.” He sighed and then he leaned over and kissed her cheek making her blush. “Listen, I know that I’ve come to you a few times this year for advice on teaching and other things but ... if this is out of line I apologize, but my daughter is one of the most important people in my life and I almost lost her tonight and my wife ... Lex just lost her parents and mine are dead and non-existent in my world anyway ... I did see you as a mother-figure and well, would you be alright if my kids called you Grandma?”

McGonagall laughed, her eyes widening in surprise. “I would be

honoured by that. I was never lucky enough to have children of my own. I would love to be a grandmother.”

He grinned and pulled her close for another hug. “Thanks ... mum.”

She laughed and her face took on that familiar stern look. “Let’s not go too far now.”

Sirius laughed. “So you were really going to take me home with you for the summer?”

She nodded. “If it was the only option left, yes. I probably would have tied you to a chair to maintain my sanity, though.”

He grinned. “Yeah, probably.” His eyes grew serious again. “Lex has to be on bed rest until the end of her pregnancy. Poppy says that she might lose the baby otherwise or go into premature labour.”

McGonagall nodded. “We’ll take care of it. Everything will be alright. Now you go back in there and be with your wife. She’s going to be angry with you, but she needs you there.”

Sirius grinned. “Thank you.”

McGonagall watched him hurry off and she sighed. Her, a grandmother? What a thought.

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The weeks dragged on into months and Harry could see the stress starting to get to his godfather. Lexy was in their suite now and she wasn’t allowed to move from the bed without a particular reason. She was eight months pregnant now and he knew that it was also the fact that she had to stop teaching that was getting to her. Students were able to go to her for questions and things but it wasn’t the same. He and Ginny had spent a lot of their free time in there trying to entertain her.

Harry’s Care of Magical Creatures Class had been cancelled due to the weather so he had just entered the suite when he heard the

yelling.

"I DON'T CARE, SIRIUS! I CAN'T POSSIBLY STAY HERE ANYMORE! I'M GOING INSANE!"

"Lex, you've got to! If we want this baby to be born healthy then you have to do what Poppy says!" Sirius demanded.

"I can't!" She sobbed. "I just ... I can't do this it's too much!"

Harry peeked through the open door and watched as Sirius enveloped his wife in his arms and held her close. "Shh, baby, you can do it. I know you can. Remember how much you want this little girl? She's going to be our world, alright?"

She nodded as her head rested against his heart. "I'm sorry."

"No honey, don't be. I know this must be hard for you." He kissed her softly. "It's hard enough on me."

Her eyes met Harry's at the door and she smiled. "I'm alright now; I promise not to yell at you too, Harry."

He blushed and stepped into the room. "Sorry to interrupt. I just ... well class was cancelled and I thought I'd come up and see how you were doing?"

Lexy rolled her eyes. "I'm not an invalid!" She sighed. "I'm alright, I guess. Come sit down."

Harry took a seat on the bed. "I uh ... I got a letter from Da today. Lyra's doing well. She's in love with the idea of Mum being pregnant and keeps curling up with her head on her belly to try to hear the baby. Da says she kicked and Lyra jumped so high. He laughed at her."

Sirius grinned as Lexy leaned back against him, his arms wrapped around her. "Lyra is ... she's special I don't know. When I found out that James and Lily were adopting her I was more than shocked. I never expected it but she's there and she's perfect for them. James



dotes on her. With you, he was always ready to show you how to play pranks and to take you out on a broom. With Lyra, he still does those things but at the same time he ... spoils her rotten. Funny how dads always see daughters differently."

Harry nodded. "Well, considering everything she's gone through, she deserves it. I know Da's been going out with her when she changes in his panther form. She takes the Wolfsbane potion as well. When I go home, I plan to go out with them at night as well. Da says that when Lyra takes the potion she's not violent in any way she just curls into the panther and sleeps. It's almost as if she knows its Da and is comfortable there. She's been writing letters to Draco and I too. They're so carefully written, and funny, too. You just know that she's enjoying herself."

Lexy smiled and her hands spread out over her stomach. "I want our baby."

Sirius grinned and kissed his wife softly. "Soon love. How's Lily doing? She's what six months along now?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, and Da says she's doing great. She's due in September."

"Well, this kid's got a little over a month to go but she'll be good." Lexy replied. "She's going to be her Daddy's Little Princess."

Sirius grinned. "Yeah, definitely. I already know I'm going to spoil her."

Harry laughed. "Listen, I've been wondering. I haven't heard any plans of you guys going to get that horcrux, the cup of Hufflepuff? I know it was mentioned at the meeting and Da says that I'm not going but that you, Da, and Frank are."

Sirius nodded. "We've discussed it. Dumbledore wanted to do some more research into the area and then everything happened with Lex's parents and the baby, but we're going this weekend. It's been planned out and no you're not coming so don't ask me."

Harry sighed. "I wasn't going to. Da already gave me a lecture about why I wasn't coming and how I had other things to do. He said everyone has a role to play in this war and it's not my time yet. I told him that I have all this power that I've never even used not really. I mean, I've never used my animagus transformations except for the occasional werewolf night and the one time I used my phoenix to bring Ginny back to the manor. I do a lot of things wandless now but I've still never really used my power."

"Harry, you will. But you don't want Voldemort to know about the powers you do have. It's a secret and the more power you have that he doesn't know about the more it will affect the final outcome. That's your role and you know it. Let us handle as much as we can." Sirius replied. "It's not fair for the world to rest solely on your shoulders."

Lexy nodded. "Let them handle it, Harry. I know it's horrible not being able to do anything, but it's all for the best in the end. You will get to play your role."

Harry nodded. "I know. Well I just wanted to stop by and... yeah."

Sirius grinned. "Isn't Ginny done potions about now?"

Harry grinned. "She is. We haven't really had any time to ourselves lately. I'm hoping this weekend I can change that, as long as we hide from Hermione."

Sirius laughed. "You mean she's going to want to do some revising? I'm shocked."

"Yeah, I know. Exams are in two weeks. She's been studying like mad. Well I'm going to go find Ginny. I'll see you guys later."

"See you, Harry," Lexy replied.

Sirius watched his godson hurry out of the room and he turned to grin at his wife. "Okay, I know it's none of my business, but how much sexual tension have you noticed between those two?"

"Harry and Ginny?" At her husband's nod she grinned. "A lot. I'd say

by the looks of it, Harry is patiently waiting for Ginny to make a decision and that it's driving him crazy."

Sirius grinned. "That's what I thought." Then he turned her and kissed her softly, all thoughts of Harry and Ginny gone from his head.

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Harry found Ginny standing in front of the potions room door talking to Colin.

"I just don't get it, Colin, what do you see in her? She obviously doesn't want anything to do with you."

Colin shrugged. "No idea. Besides, it doesn't matter it's not like we have any Hogsmeade trips to look forward to. It's all just exams. O.W.L.s, I swear, are going to be the death of me."

Harry stepped up behind Ginny and slipped his arms around her waist. "Ah, don't worry, Colin, O.W.L.s aren't that bad."

Colin snorted. "Yeah, well I don't have the brains like you two do."

Ginny laughed. "You do too; liar."

Colin grinned. "Alright I do. Anyway, I've got a lot of work to do this weekend so I'll talk to you guys later."

"Bye." Harry and Ginny called out as they watched him hurry off.

Ginny turned in his arms. "Mmm, I missed you."

He smiled and leaned down to kiss her softly. "I missed you too."

"Potter, Weasley, there are no public displays of affection in the hallways. Fifty points from Gryffindor." Snape replied as he scowled at them.

Harry rolled his eyes. "Right. Come on, Gin." He took the pile of books from her arms and tucked it under his arm as they started to

walk away.

“Potter!” Snape called out.

Harry turned around to look at him. He hadn’t really spoken to Snape outside of class since the day at Grimmauld Place after Christmas.

“What? Sir?”

“Tell your mother that I said congratulations, on the baby.” Then he turned and walked back into his office without another word.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Harry asked, scowling after him.

Ginny shrugged. “I have no idea. But there is definitely something there. Something we don’t know. Do you think maybe your parents know?”

“No idea. But if I didn’t know him better you’d think he fancied my mum or something? But he hated her in school and was always calling her a mudblood, so I doubt that’s it. What?” He asked, his eyes focusing on his girlfriend.

“I don’t know but I don’t think the crush thing is too far off. There’s something going on with Snape.”

Harry shuddered. “I really hope he doesn’t have a crush on my mum because that’s just creepy, and I think Da would kill him.”

Ginny laughed. “Yeah. Come on, let’s go grab some dinner before we head back to the common room.”

“Alright.”

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As soon as dinner was over, Harry dragged Ginny to his dorm with all of their books. He just wanted to have her to himself for a little while.

“Do you really think we’re going to get any work done in here?” Ginny asked, as she lay on her stomach on his bed, her feet sticking up in

the air. Her Charms book laying open in front of her.

He grinned and leaned over to kiss her softly. "I think we might, if we work hard at it."

She laughed. "Mmm, come back here and do that again."

He leaned down and brought his lips to hers. It was soft and sweet and it made him ache. Sirius hadn't been too far off on the sexual tension thing, he was dying inside. He had told her that he would wait but at the same time he wasn't sure how much longer he could wait. He wanted her so badly that he could taste it. His hand slid down to her waist and his fingers dug into her hip. She moaned and pulled him closer just as a loud hoot made them break apart.

Ginny's mouth opened in shock as she stared at the tawny owl that had landed on Harry's nightstand. "Hermes?"

The owl flew towards them and dropped a letter into Ginny's lap.

"Hermes, as in Percy's owl?" Harry asked, staring down at the letter. "That Hermes?"

Ginny nodded. She ripped open the letter, her eyes widening as she scanned the parchment. "Oh my God! Listen to this." Then she began to read the letter out loud.

**Dear Ginny,**

**I know that we've never really talked before except for that one time when you caught Percy and I kissing in that classroom. He was kind of rude to you but ... well, we were embarrassed to be caught by his eleven-year-old sister. I'm sure you can understand.**

**Anyway, you're probably wondering why on earth I'm writing to you. Well, I'm in love with your brother. Merlin knows why. He's an overly ambitious, pompous git but I love every inch of him from his horn rims to the freckles on his toes. He makes my heart go pitter-patter in my chest. I can't help it. I don't want to**

help it. However, there are some issues that need to be addressed.

Percy and I have been together for four years now and I know everything that happened between him and your family. He knows he's wrong and he's known that he's been wrong since less than a week after he stormed out of your house. But he's too stubborn to do anything about it. He's afraid as well; he's afraid that no one will love him or accept him anymore. If he ever found out that I told you that; well, I think he would curse me. He loves his family so much but he's afraid of what he did. The war is escalating and as it goes on the more worried he is. He's been promoted within the ministry again to Junior Executive. It's one of the head positions in the minister's office. He's in charge of political speeches and campaigns. It's a good job for him. He's a wonderful speech writer. This time, with a real minister in charge, he deserved his job.

I know I've been rambling ... but I want us to be a part of your family. I chose to write to you because Percy thinks highly of you. He's always telling me stories of things you did when you were younger; how you used to follow him around and ask him questions about every book he ever read, trying to see how smart he was. He wants to have his family back and he wants to be forgiven, but he's too damn stubborn to take that step on his own. I'm hoping that you will help me bring his family back to him.

A lot has changed, Ginny. As I'm sure you know, Percy and I eloped in Martinique two months after the fight with you lot. I wanted to wait and have his family there, but he insisted. You see, my parents were killed three years ago by You-Know-Who and ... I want to have a family again. We've started, don't get me wrong. The twins are devilishly handsome and look quite a bit like their father except they both have my eyes. Paul and Preston are wonderful. Of course, they're going through the terrible twos so I'm sure you can imagine the stress we're going through. Paul Percival Weasley is more like his father every day. He always wants to know why and asks so many questions. He wants to know the answer to everything. Preston Arthur is bit

more reserved. Though Percy tells me his name is well deserved since he seems to have an incredible fascination with muggle objects. The newest edition to our family, Scott Ronald, is doing just lovely himself. He's only six weeks old and the twins are fascinated by him. Scott will keep us busy too, I think.

But enough about us ... once I get talking about the children, I tend to ramble. I know your parents must want to see their grandsons but yet they've made no move to do so. Percy is stubborn but he tells me that they know of our marriage and of our children but don't want anything to do with him or the family we've made together. I refuse to believe such nonsense. We need to get them back together, to have a family again. If you can just give Percy some sort of sign that you want him back, want to forgive him; then maybe I can pressure him towards apologizing. I know he wants to but his stubbornness hides it all.

Well I hope to hear back from you soon.

With love,  
Penny

Harry stared at Ginny in shock. "Percy's married with three kids?"

Ginny nodded. "Apparently. There's no way that mum and dad know about this? Mum would never abandon her grandsons like that!"

"I know. She's been pining for grandkids. Wow, married. That's crazy!" He ran his fingers through his hair as he glanced at Hermes. "Are you going to write back?"

"Yeah, right now."

Harry watched as she pulled out a piece of parchment and began to write. She wrote for twenty minutes and when she was done she grinned at him.

"Alright how does this sound?" She handed the letter to him so that he could read.

*Dear Penny,*

*Your letter was definitely a surprise. Of course I remember you, but I have some news for you. I had no idea that you and Percy were married let alone have children. I didn't even know Percy was engaged! I can't believe that he didn't tell us! Being mad is no excuse! I'll tell you this, as well, there's no way that my parents know about this either. First of all, because they would tell us; and second, because my mum wants grandbabies pretty badly and would be over there all the time!*

*Percy is more than a git for keeping this from us! I've always thought so, no matter how much I love him. But if you can find a way to bring him back to us, then yes I will help you without a doubt! But Percy has to be willing to make some adjustments himself. First he has to apologize to dad. That was the only time I have ever seen my father that hurt. He cried and that's something I've definitely never seen before. He hurt him a lot and he needs to apologize to him. Second, he has to apologize to my mum for ignoring her. He was there at the trial of Sirius Black and he didn't even look at them. Mum was heartbroken and cried all night. Once he does that I think we're on a good track. Mum and dad will welcome him home with opening arms if he can do that.*

*Percy also needs to apologize to my boyfriend, Harry. He may not have said it to his face but he basically said that he was a liar and believed all of the lies that were being said even though he's known Harry since he was eleven years old. We're working towards trying to keep Voldemort from hurting us and if Percy can't accept the fact that our family is willing to do whatever needs to be done to help stop him then no, he's not welcome here.*

*I love Percy more than anything, and I want him home. I want all of you safe. I also want to meet my nephews. Ronald and Arthur — dad and Ron will be very touched that Percy named his sons after them. I will help you.*

*With love,  
Your sister-in-law  
Ginny*



*P.S. Please send pictures of your family.*

Harry nodded. "I don't think you missed anything."

She smiled. "Good." She folded the letter up and gave it to Hermes, watching him fly off into the sun set. "I still can't believe ... I'm an aunt."

Harry laughed. "Yeah, I guess you are." He pulled her close for another deep kiss just as the dormitory door opened and Seamus walked in.

"Looking cozy, Harry?"

Harry grinned. "I am, how about you?"

Seamus grinned. "Brilliant, as I have the love of a good woman."

Lavender rolled her eyes as she stepped in behind him. "Right. We thought we'd come up here for some peace and quiet. I can't believe exams are only two weeks away."

Ginny nodded, tapping her quill against the textbook. "Tell me about it. I've got O.W.L.s this year! I've studied so much, I feel like my brain is going to explode."

"It won't. Trust me; that feeling will pass." Seamus replied as he pulled Lavender into his arms as he sat down across from them on the bed.

"You know, I can't even remember the last time we all just sat together and talked. Everything has been so hectic and there hasn't really been any news on Voldemort or anything." Ginny replied, rolling over and sitting up so that she was leaning back against Harry. "The Hogsmeade trip I guess was probably the last time."

Seamus nodded. "I think so too. Who says we don't do homework and instead just hang out here?"

“Homework is important, Seamus! Exams are only two weeks away! We have to be prepared!” Hermione insisted from the doorway, her arms full of books.

Ron rolled his eyes from where he stood next to her. “Right. We didn’t know that already.”

Harry grinned as he watched his friend glower at her boyfriend. “No really, I agree with Seamus. We should just hang out in here. It’s been a while.”

“What are we going to do?” Ginny asked as she tossed her homework on the floor.

Seamus grinned wickedly. “We could play strip poker?”

Lavender, Ginny, and Hermione rolled their eyes before saying simultaneously. “I don’t think so.”

He shrugged, leaning back against the headboard. “Just a suggestion.”

“Besides,” Ginny began. “I don’t even know how to play poker.”

“We could always play strip Quidditch,” Harry suggested. Ginny elbowed him in the gut. “Ow! Hey, Sirius mentioned it once.”

Ron laughed. “Strip Quidditch — how does that even work?”

“Something about scoring a goal and then the other team has to take off an article of clothing.” Harry explained.

Seamus grinned. “Well, hell, I’m in.”

Lavender rolled her eyes. “No.”

“What about strip Exploding Snap?” Ron suggested as he took a seat on the bed too, Hermione sitting down next to him.

Seamus shuddered. “That one sounds dangerous. Maybe strip

cribbage?”

Hermione groaned. “Okay, no games that have the word strip in them. We’re not getting naked.”

Seamus pouted. “You guys are no fun.”

Lavender turned around and kissed him softly. “Mmm, right, no fun.” Then she brightened. “What about a game of Truth or Dare?”

Ginny grinned. “That could be fun! I say we get more people involved though.”

Hermione nodded. “Yeah, like Neville and Luna for instance and I’m sure Draco might be interested.”

“Truth or Dare?” Seamus asked and then he grinned. “Hey I can dare someone to strip, right?”

Lavender rolled her eyes. “Are all guys pigs?”

“It’s a condition,” Ginny supplied, nodding.

“There’s no cure. I’ve looked.” Hermione said.

Harry laughed. “You three are too much. Alright, Truth or Dare that sounds like fun. It’s definitely a good way to relieve some of the tension that’s been eating at all of us too. We need a fun night.”

Ron nodded. “Yeah, we do. Alright, so why don’t we go find some people and meet up in the Room of Requirement in say twenty minutes?”

They all agreed and headed off to find people interested in playing.

Ginny held Harry’s hand in hers as they headed down to the Slytherin Common Room. “It should be fun.”

Harry’s eyebrows rose. “I don’t know, I still think strip Quidditch would have been more interesting.”

Ginny laughed. "Hmm, not going to happen. Do you think I should have told Ron about the letter from Percy?"

Harry shook his head. "No, I wouldn't. Wait and see if Penelope writes back. I have a feeling that Ron won't be as forgiving as you."

Ginny nodded. "That's what I thought."

"What are you two doing down here?" Delilah asked as she stepped out of the shadows. Her hair was pulled back into a high ponytail and she had changed out of her uniform into jeans and a tank top.

Harry grinned. "Actually we were looking to round up some people interested in some fun. Want to join us in a game of Truth or Dare?"

"Truth or Dare?"

He nodded. "Yeah."

She sighed as she looked back at the common room door. "What the hell, sure?"

Ginny laughed. "Great! Why don't you find out if Blaise and Ted and Draco and all them want to play?"

"Draco?"

Harry nodded. "Yeah, he would definitely want be involved in the game."

She sighed. "Sure. Room of Requirement, I suppose?" When they nodded she smiled. "Alright, I'll meet you there."

They watched her walk away and Harry grinned. "I think she's got the hots for Draco and is worried and afraid of what she's feeling."

Ginny smiled. "Well, we can always dare them to snog. That would make it interesting."

He laughed. "Have I ever mentioned how much I love the way your mind works?" He pulled her close for a soft kiss.

"You have, but I can always hear it again."

"Alright, let's go find some others."

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Within thirty minutes, Harry, Ginny, Ron, Hermione, Neville, Luna, Seamus, Lavender, Colin, Demelza, Blaise, Daphne, Tracy, Tony, Ted, Dana, Draco, and Delilah were all sitting around the huge common room that had appeared in the Room of Requirement. Chesterfields and big cushy armchairs were around the room with a table in the middle. Pizza and butterbeer had even appeared on the table. It was a great room.

"This was a good plan," Daphne murmured as she licked pizza sauce off her finger. "I definitely need a break from studying."

Blaise nodded, grinning stupidly as his girlfriend piled mushrooms from her pizza onto his plate. "Yeah, me too. My brain was beginning to hurt."

Ted snorted. "Right, like you have a brain."

Harry laughed as he watched everyone. It was nice to just hang out together. He had really gotten to know Blaise and Ted last year but this year there had just been so much going on that they had never really managed to hang out, other than in DA meetings. For Slytherins they were pretty cool. "Alright, so let's get started."

"How does one play?" Luna asked as she glanced around the room curiously.

Lavender tossed her hair over her shoulder and curled her legs up under her as she leaned back against her boyfriend's knee. "Well, it's Truth or Dare. Someone, say me for example, would ask you Truth or Dare and you would pick one. Truth would be that you have to tell the truth if you don't we can punish you in some way, mostly by having

you to do a dare of the questioner's choice or something like that. Dare is daring you to do something. If you refuse to do the dare ... well we should pick something. I mean if you refuse to answer the question or do the dare what's the punishment?"

Seamus grinned. "Strip. Do the dare or an article of clothing comes off."

Lavender rolled her eyes. "Will you stop thinking about stripping?"

Daphne wiped her hands on her napkin. "No, that seems fair. If you refuse to do the dare or answer the question then an article of clothing must be removed. Does anyone disagree?"

There was a murmured agreement around the room.

"How do we know if they're telling the truth or not?" Tracy asked.

Hermione smiled. "We can do a charm on them. If anyone thinks that they're lying we'll simply do the truth spell?"

"Works for me." Lavender replied.

"So who starts?" Tracy asked as she glanced around the room.

"I think that Lavender should start since it was her idea." Ginny suggested as she reached for another slice of pizza.

Lavender shrugged and took a sip of her butterbeer. "Alright. Um," she glanced around the room, wondering who she should pick and then she grinned at Tracy. "Trace, Truth or Dare?"

Tracy sighed. "Truth, I guess." There was a slight booing and she stuck her tongue out. "It's still truth."

Lavender nodded. "Alright um ... is it true that Goldstein there has a heart-shaped birthmark on his arse?"

Tony blushed a deep pink and Tracy laughed before kissing his cheek. "Totally true. It's on his left butt cheek and the cutest little thing

that I've ever seen, right Anthony?"

"Heart-shaped Goldstein?" Seamus asked, trying to stifle a laugh.

Tony shrugged. "It's not my fault. Where did you hear that from anyway?"

Lavender grinned. "Lisa Turpin mentioned it. I wondered if it was true."

"Well it is." Tracy replied. "Okay, so it's my turn now, right?" When Lavender nodded she grinned. "Okay, who will be next? Hmmm ... alright, Harry, Truth or Dare?"

Harry sighed and smirked silently. "Dare."

"Whoo Hoo!" Lavender yelled as Daphne and Tracy whistled.

Tracy grinned. "Alright. Dare ... well, I dare you to go find Romilda Vane and profess your undying love for her on your knees with flowers and poetry."

Harry's mouth dropped open in shock as Ginny giggled from his lap. "You want me to what?"

Tracy nodded. "Right now."

"How would you know if I did it or not?"

"Oh I know!" Lavender exclaimed. "There's this spell that we can do that follows you so that we can witness your actions. It's kind of like a pensive except we see it as you're doing it."

"If I refuse, since Romilda is a bit of psycho?" Harry asked.

Daphne shrugged. "Then you've got to take off an article of clothing."

Harry sighed. "Alright." He stood up. "But I'll get you back for this one." He left the room after they cast the viewing spell wondering how he was going to go through with it.

Meanwhile, in the Room of Requirement, they were all surrounding the table watching Harry as he moved through the halls.

He conjured flowers out of thin air and headed into the Gryffindor common room. He closed his eyes for a moment as he noticed her. She really was very pretty and he knew that what he was about to do was very cruel but ... well she kind of deserved it. Harry took a deep breath before he made his way towards her. She was sitting at a table with a group of her friends. He silently cursed Tracy Davis as he fell to his knees in front of her and hoped that he had a big sloppy grin on his face.

“Romilda!”

She turned to look down at him and her eyes widened in surprise. “Um, hi Harry. What are you doing?”

He took her hand in his and brought it to his lips. “You are a treasure to behold and a beauty so, er, untold. Here I bequeath to you these flowers so that you can feel my love in, er, showers.” He placed the flowers on her lap and grinned before he gave her a dramatic bow. “You’re the love of my life, Romilda Vane. Please, forgive me for not noticing you sooner.”

Romilda’s mouth was open in shock as she stared down at him. One of her friends next to her giggled. “You love me?” She asked.

Harry tried not to grimace as he swallowed. “Love of my life.”

Her friend giggled harder. “How much are you being paid to do this, Potter?”

Romilda glared at her friend. “Doris! He’s not lying. He loves me! I’m going to be Lady Romilda Potter, has a nice ring to it doesn’t it?” She threw her arms around Harry and planted her lips on his.

Harry pushed her away and stood up, wiping his mouth. “Glad you think so. Oh, and Doris is it?” When the girl nodded he grinned. “I wasn’t paid to do this, I was dared. See you around ladies.” Then he



turned and walked away, leaving Romilda staring after him, her eyes burning in anger.

The group in the Room of Requirement busted out laughing. When Harry returned and was seated with Ginny comfortably in his lap she turned to look at him.

“That was the corniest poem that I’ve ever heard.”

Harry shrugged. “I had to make it up on the spot, give a bloke a break. Besides, as if ‘his eyes are as a green as a —”

“Don’t you dare!” Ginny shrieked.

Harry grinned. “I was just saying.” He turned to look at everyone. “So did I pass?”

Tracy laughed. “I think so. Good job, Harry and you do know that Romilda Vane is going to swear revenge against you, right?”

He shrugged as he reached over for another slice of pizza. “Possibly, but she doesn’t worry me so much.”

“And he’s got me to protect him.” Ginny replied, grinning broadly.

Harry laughed. “See? Problem solved. Alright so now it’s my turn, right? Okay ... Hermione, Truth or Dare?”

Hermione sighed and bit her lip nervously as she glanced around the room. “Um ... fine Dare.”

Harry grinned. “Good because I’ve got the perfect thing in mind for you.”

She narrowed her eyes slightly. “Payback’s a bitch, remember that?”

Harry laughed as he stole a bite of Ginny’s pizza. “Please, I just told Romilda Vane that I love her and I recited a corny poem. I’m not afraid of you. Alright, so I dare you to put serious moves on Remus in front of Sirius and then make sure that you make a huge point about

how unattractive Sirius is.”

She snorted. “You’re joking, right?”

Harry shook his head as he crossed his arms behind his head grinning. “Nope. I think Sirius needs to be taken down a notch or so in this whole Sexiest Professor thing, it’s getting to his head.”

“How am I supposed to get to Remus?” Hermione asked as she glanced around the room.

“Go down to Sirius’ suite. I know for a fact that Remus is visiting there tonight for at least another hour.” Harry replied with a grin.

Hermione sighed and let them cast the viewing spell on her before she left the room. She headed down the hall to Sirius and Lexy’s suite wondering how on earth she was going to do this. Did she even know how to flirt? She knocked on the door and smiled up at Sirius when he opened it. “Hello, I hope I’m not interrupting.”

Sirius grinned at her. “No, not at all, come on in. In fact, Remus and James stopped by as well.”

She stepped into the room. James was there too, even better, as if this moment wasn’t going to be embarrassing enough as it was. She grinned at them. “Where’s Lexy?”

“She’s in the shower. It helps her relax.” Sirius explained as he closed the door.

Hermione nodded. “I get that. Showers can be relaxing; not as much as a bubble bath mind you.” She smiled at Remus. “My Remus, you look wonderful.”

Remus gave her a puzzled look. “Thank you. I guess my new family is agreeing with me.”

James grinned from where he sat in the common room, a bottle of beer dangling from his fingertips. “I’d say so.”

Hermione managed a small laugh. "Yeah." She took a step closer; her heart was pounding in her chest as she ran her fingertips over his arm. "I just meant; you're really ... built is all. If you were still here I bet you'd be voted the Sexiest Professor."

Sirius frowned at this. "Hey! That's my title!"

James snorted as his eyes widened at Hermione's actions. "Hermione, I think you're making Padfoot a little jealous."

Hermione shrugged. "It's not my fault if I'm attracted to a real man. A man like Remus; built of sexy brawn and brains." She stifled a giggle as all three of their mouths dropped open. "Hell, I can't do this!" She exclaimed as she laughed. "It's too hard." She wiped tears of laughter from her eyes as she bolted from the room. When she closed the door behind her in the Room of Requirement she sighed. "I couldn't stop laughing, I'm sorry."

Harry grinned. "She tried guys but I don't know she could have done more with that situation. Did you see their mouths drop open?"

"Vote?" Lavender suggested.

The room nodded and Ron smirked. "Mione, I think you've got to remove some clothes."

"Oh, come on guys! I went down there and I flirted and I ... oh bugger it!" She kicked her shoes off. "Ooh there."

Seamus laughed. "Excellent, now we've got the party started. Though I think we should be able to choose the article of clothing?"

Daphne nodded. "I think so too. I mean, shoes?"

Tracy grinned. "I think she should have to take off her shirt personally."

Hermione blushed and unbuttoned her blouse, slipping it off and throwing it behind her. "Happy now?"

Ron's eyes were staring at her greedily in the pretty white lace bra. "Yeah."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Fine, want to start the party, Seamus? Truth or Dare?"

Seamus leaned back lazily. "Dare."

She smirked at him as she took a sip of her butterbeer. "Let me put a spell on you and you have to go into the library and do a little singing and dancing routine."

Seamus grinned. "No problem, Granger."

Hermione muttered a charm and grinned as everyone busted out laughing. "I gave you you're favourite body part."

Seamus glanced down at his body and yelped in surprise. His chest had blossomed into full blown breasts. He had also somehow ended up in a halter top. He just grinned. "Hey, these are nice."

Hermione rolled her eyes. "Go knock 'em dead!"

Seamus shrugged and left the room. The breasts felt weird on him, heavier, but at the same time he could feel himself grinning stupidly. He had to look so bloody ridiculous. He stepped into the library and headed over into a deserted corner where a bunch of other sixth years were sitting; most of them from Hufflepuff. "Hey guys."

They turned to look at him and busted out laughing.

Hannah smirked. "Seamus, what happened?"

Ernie nodded. "Did wishing finally pay off?"

"Haha, funny guys." He cupped them in his hands before he started to sing. "Actually ... *pour some sugar on me, ooh in the name of love, pour some sugar on me babe, come on fire me up! Pour your sugar on me, oh I can't get enough! I'm hot sticky sweet from my head to my feet, yeah.*" He swung his hips to the beat as Ernie, Hannah, and

their friends stared at him.

He made a small bow and left them staring after him before he headed back to the Room of Requirement.

"Pour some sugar on me?" Lavender asked when he sat back down.

Seamus grinned. "Well, if you insist love."

Hermione removed the breasts from him as everyone giggled. "That was interesting. I think you enjoyed having breasts a bit too much."

Seamus shrugged. "What's not to love? Alright, so ... Lavender. Truth or Dare?"

She sighed as she leaned back against her boyfriend. "Um ... Truth I guess."

He grinned. "Truth, alright ... tell us a sexual fantasy."

She blushed. "Seamus."

His lips brushed her ear as he whispered. "I might just make it come true."

Lavender rolled her eyes at him. "Alright, well, it's not ... well I just ... I have this love affair with peanut butter and chocolate sauce. I always thought maybe one day I could ... you know."

Tracy whistled as the room began to laugh and Seamus was staring at his girlfriend in appreciation.

"I will buy you peanut butter and chocolate sauce," he murmured in her ear and she laughed, turning to kiss him softly.

"Alright, so ... Ginny," Lavender squealed. "Truth or Dare."

Ginny blew her hair out of her eyes. "Truth."

"Are you still a virgin?" She whispered.

“Hey!” Ron exclaimed. “You think I want to know that about my sister! She damn well better be a virgin!”

Ginny blushed scarlet and nodded silently as she stared down at her hands.

The group laughed as she turned an even brighter shade of red.

Ron gasped in surprise. “Okay Gin, I was being brotherly there but damn ... poor Harry.”

Harry shrugged sheepishly as his arm snaked out to hold Ginny closer. “I’m not going to pressure her.”

“Still ... Gin, that’s just cruel. You guys have been together what two years?” Ron murmured as Hermione elbowed him in the gut. He just shook his head. “Bet they’ve turned purple,” he mumbled under his breath.

Blaise smirked. “Damn Harry, that’s definitely ... poor bloke.”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Okay let’s not talk about my sex life. Gin?”

Ginny was still blushing a bit. “Truth or Dare ... um ... Dee.”

Demelza had so far been pretty quiet so she looked up in surprise. “Truth.”

Ginny grinned broadly. “Dee, why don’t you tell the room about this incredibly hunky dream guy who is actually a student here at school? Who is he?”

Demelza’s mouth dropped open. “Gin! That’s so unfair!” She protested.

Ginny shrugged. “Dream guy, Dee?”

Colin glanced over at Demelza now. “I keep hearing about this guy but I’d really like to know who he is?”

She blushed and slumped a bit in her seat. "Nuh-uh, no way!"

Daphne shrugged. "Then start stripping, honey."

Demelza pulled her skirt off so that her blouse covered her panties and stayed silent as she glared daggers at Ginny. She was too busy glaring daggers to notice the way that Colin's eyes travelled up her long legs with interest and appreciation. "There. Luna, Truth or Dare?"

Luna shrugged. "Dare."

"Go dive into the Black Lake, naked."

"Alright," Luna replied, barely blinking.

When she came back her hair was wet and she cuddled into Neville as they stared at her in surprise. She hadn't even said a peep. "Dana, Truth or Dare?"

"Dare."

"Go snog Snape, with tongue."

Dana laughed. "Are you kidding? He'd totally kill me!"

Harry shrugged. "I don't know. Probably the best action he's had in a while."

The room laughed as Dana headed towards Snape's office. She knocked on the door and smiled up at him.

"Good evening, Professor, sorry to disturb you but I have a question?"

Snape glowered at her. "What's that, Miss Anderson?"

She stood on her toes and yanked his mouth towards hers. She slipped him the tongue just before he pushed her away.

“What is the meaning of this, Miss Anderson?” He demanded angrily.

Dana shrugged. “Nothing, see you.” She practically ran all the way back to the room. “Okay, you all so owe me for that one! He could have killed me!”

“Or shagged you,” Daphne murmured.

“Ew!” Dana shuddered. “Alright, Teddy, Truth or Dare?”

Ted sighed and tried to get the mental picture of his girlfriend snogging Snape out of his mind. “Dare.”

“You have to grow a long beard like Dumbledore and then you have to go up to him and ask pointers on how he keeps it so neat and nice.”

Everyone laughed.

“A beard like Dumbledore?” He nuzzled her neck. “Kinky.” He cast a hair growing charm on himself and a long black beard grew down to his bellybutton. “How does it look?”

The room continued to laugh as he left the room and spoke to a very amused Dumbledore. When he came back he grinned. “Dumbledore suggested I use my wand to help give it shape.”

Dana giggled. “Oh my, that’s rich!” She used her wand to get rid of the beard before she kissed her boyfriend. “Much better.”

Ted grinned. “Definitely. Alright, Delilah, Truth or Dare?”

Delilah was enjoying herself immensely and she had almost forgotten that she had yet to be picked yet. She gulped when she heard her name. “Dare.”

Ted grinned. “I dare you to find Pug-faced Pansy, take her clothes off, and throw her in the lake.”



Draco snorted into his butter beer. "Sorry, just a happy moment for me. I can see her squealing."

Delilah grinned. "Alright."

She headed into the Slytherin Common Room and over to Pansy. "Hi Pansy."

Pansy glared at her. "Knight, what do you want?"

Delilah shrugged. "I was hoping I could talk to you for a moment."

"Fine, but make it quick!" She demanded.

Once they were down by the lake, Delilah used a vanishing spell to get rid of her clothes as Pansy shrieked. "Payback's a bitch, Pansy!" Then she pushed her as she screamed and fell into the lake.

Pansy came up spluttering. "You get me out here!" She shrieked.

Delilah shrugged. "Maybe later." Then she headed back up to the Room of Requirement.

The dares continued to get more interesting as the night wore on. Demelza was asked again, this time by Colin just who it was she fancied and she had decided to take her shirt off. This had caused Colin to practically swallow his tongue as she wore bright red panties and a white lace tank top. Demelza had told Tony to go pretend to make love with a Hogwarts statue — it had been even more interesting when Snape had caught him at it. Tony told Neville to start a dance party in Dumbledore's office. Neville had chickened out on that one and instead had taken off his shirt making the entire group of girls giggle in surprise. Neville was well built these days. Neville had then dared Daphne to kiss Hagrid. She had voted against it and taken off her shirt instead. Ted had to turn Filch into a male cat so that he and Mrs. Norris could finally be happy together. Tony had to proposition Peeves. Dana had to do a table dance. Luna had to shave her head and then the charm to grow her hair back was rainbow colours and lasted a week. Colin doctored photos of Snape so that it looked like he was getting it on with Madame Maxime and

Rita Skeeter and posted them around the school. Harry was dared to do a strip tease and decided to take his shirt off instead. Neville told Snape to piss off. Draco was dared to apologize to Hermione for every time he ever called her a mudblood and he had to give her flowers. Seamus dared Flitwick to a drinking contest and successfully managed to drink him under the table within thirty minutes. Ron proposed to Dumbledore while he was in a meeting with Snape.

But the really interesting ones started after Tracy was told to flash the room.

"Alright, Blaise, Truth or Dare?"

Blaise sighed. "Truth."

Tracey grinned. "Why don't you tell Daphne just what you've been planning for months and months?"

Blaise blushed. "Come on, Tracy, you know it's a secret."

She shrugged. "One that should be coming out."

Blaise sighed as Daphne stared at him curiously. Then he fell to his knees in front of her. "Daph? I love you. It took you forever to give me a chance but I'm glad I waited. I would have waited forever for you if I had to. You're the world to me. Tracy knows I've been planning this, as I asked her advice half a dozen times, her being your best and all but ... I guess now's as good a time as any. Daphne, will you marry me?"

The room was silent as Daphne's mouth opened in surprise. Then she jumped out of the chair and straight into her boyfriend's arms. "Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!"

Blaise grinned and kissed her deeply. "Thank Merlin!"

She laughed. "I love you too."

"No offence, but aren't you two a bit young to be getting married. We still have another year left?" Ted asked.

Blaise shrugged. "We don't have to get married right away. Daph turns seventeen in September and I'm already seventeen. It's what we want."

Daphne nodded and kissed him again.

Draco sighed. "That's the kicker ain't it? It's what you want. If I was in love I would want to get married too but as I'm not in love and yet am being forced to get married in eight weeks, I can see why I'm jealous!"

Tracy frowned. "I thought Pansy was just BS-ing us? You really have to marry her?"

Draco nodded as he gulped down some butter beer. "I really have to marry her. Our parents signed a betrothment contract."

"There's no way for you to get out of it at all?" Delilah asked.

Draco's eyes met hers, his heart aching for her. "There's one way but it's not going to happen."

"What is it?" Delilah asked as her hands folded in her lap.

"I have to be with someone else. I have to love them and want to marry them and then register with the damn ministry promising that I will marry that person within a certain amount of time. My only other option is if Pansy dies. I'm not that mean." He explained.

"Oh," Delilah murmured.

The room was silent for a few minutes before Blaise cleared his throat. "Well, um, shall we continue then? Draco, Truth or Dare?"

Draco shrugged. "Dare I guess?"

Blaise nodded and he winked at Harry. "I dare you to kiss Delilah."

Delilah's mouth dropped open in shock. "Hey now! Doesn't he have

to have some sort of consent first?”

“No,” Blaise replied. “You consented when you agreed to play. Go on Draco.”

Draco swallowed another sip of his butterbeer as he watched her from across the room. This was definitely not the way he had imagined their first kiss. He stood up and headed over to her, pulling her to her feet and then he slipped his fingers into her hair and gently brought his lips to hers.

Delilah wanted to protest, but as soon as his fingers had found her hair she had melted towards him. He tasted like butterbeer and his lips were so soft but then he changed the angle of the kiss and heat speared through her. Her fingers dug into his sides as her tongue met his and the kiss deepened. Someone moaned but she wasn't sure who and she pressed herself closer to him.

Draco was in paradise. This was what he had been dreaming about most of the year. Her touch and her taste and he had known exactly how incredible it would feel to have her in his arms. He pulled back with great reluctance and he looked down into her hazel eyes and smiled.

The room whistled as he went over and sat back down.

Delilah's eyes were a little glassy and her body was still vibrating from his touch. “Well, I'll say he passed his dare.”

Blaise smirked. “Me too. Draco you're up!”

Draco grinned. “Delilah, Truth or Dare?”

She licked her lips, tasting him and she closed her eyes. “Truth.”

He tilted his head to look at her, oblivious to everyone else in the room. “Do you have feelings for me?”

The entire room turned as a unit to look at Delilah.

She gulped as she watched him. Then she bit her lip nervously and nodded. "Yeah." She broke eye contact and turned to grin at Colin. She had noticed the way his eyes had been bugging out of his skull since Demelza had removed the first article of clothing. "Colin, Truth or Dare?"

Colin shrugged, hoping some of the tension in the room would die down. "Dare."

"Pinch Dee's bum."

Colin laughed. "Are you joking?"

Delilah shook her head. "Does it look like I'm joking?"

He shrugged and pulled her up to her feet so that she was close to him. He could smell the scent she always wore and he cursed himself. This was his best friend; she was like his sister, it was wrong for him to be thinking any of the things that had been running through his mind all evening. He slid his hand around her waist and over her bottom before he gave her a quick pinch. "There," he mumbled, moving away from her as fast as he could.

Demelza's face was bright red. He had done a lot more than pinch and she hadn't minded a bit.

Colin grinned over at Ginny now. "Alright, Gin, your turn. Truth or Dare?"

The clock struck one a.m. then and Ginny shrugged. "It's late maybe we should just head up to bed."

Colin nodded. "Sounds good but first you have to pick."

Ginny sighed. "Fine, Dare."

Colin grinned. "Alright, well I've heard an interesting thing a few times and I've been curious about it. Luna and Dee call it the thing you got in New York. Other than the belly button ring. I've got no idea what it is but I would really like to know. Show it to us, Gin?"

Ginny blushed and Harry grinned. "Hey now, only I'm allowed to go dragon hunting."

Ginny blushed deeper as the room laughed. "Okay." She bunched her skirt around her thighs, tucking it between her legs to hide her panties from the room. She lifted her leg up, turning it towards the room. "Here."

Colin's mouth dropped open. "You got a tattoo!"

"Of a dragon?" Daphne exclaimed.

Tracy laughed. "Dragon hunting? Nice one, Potter."

"Is that a Hungarian Horntail?" Blaise asked.

Ron gasped. "Mum is going to murder you."

"It's gorgeous, Ginny!" Lavender breathed. "I never pegged you as the tattoo getting type, but oh my!"

Ginny blushed. "I like it."

Demelza laughed. "Luna and I were quite shocked when she first showed us."

Harry shrugged. "I just loved it."

Luna grinned. "We know that already, Harry."

He laughed. "I guess you do. Well, should we all head up to bed?" The room nodded and Harry pulled Ginny aside, kissing her deeply. "This was a good idea. Mmm, and I really love that tattoo!"

She smiled. "Me too. Now let's go to bed because we probably have loads of homework to catch up on tomorrow."

He sighed. "That's just depressing. But I'm going to get my elementals to do mine."

“Bastard,” she murmured.

Harry grinned. “Maybe, but I’m all yours.”

Ginny grinned up at him. “And don’t you forget it.”

\*\*\*\*\*

James, Sirius, and Frank were working on other problems in the meantime. They had managed to find the cave that held the Cup of Hufflepuff.

“Are you sure that we can really do this?” Frank asked. “I mean, Dumbledore’s been putting us off of coming here for months.”

James shrugged as he watched the way that the glass coffin sparkled behind the magical wall. “He’s done his research. He wanted us to come late at night and we’ve got to get behind that wall. Apparently the magic is stronger and weaker at different points throughout the day. From what I understood from Dumbledore’s research, around two and three in the morning the magical wall loses thirty percent of its power.”

“Why?” Sirius asked. “That’s kind of bizarre. Why would old Moldiemart use something that weakens over time? Why does it weaken?”

“From what I got was that the shield weakens because like anything magical the powers can only hang on for so long. Anyone can build a mystical shield,” Frank explained. “But it’s a testament to one’s power over who can hold that shield the longest. Voldemort has the power yes but like any other wizard there’s only so much power he can place here. He needs to be able to do other things. He wants to be in total control.”

James nodded as he took a step towards the wall. Just like Frank had experienced years ago, it was like a slice of sharp knives jutting themselves into his skin. He stepped back and the pain disappeared. “The question to worry about now, is how do we get past this wall?

It's obviously some sort of mystical energy that has the power to physically hurt anyone who tries to get past it."

"Here's a question to consider," Sirius murmured. "How on earth did Hermione think that Remus would beat me in the sexiest professor thing? That's a joke right."

James rolled his eyes. "Padfoot, as I told you the first five times you asked, I have no idea and it doesn't matter. That was very unlike Hermione anyway and I'm looking forward to finding out the answer later on. Now can we please get back to the barrier?"

Sirius sighed. "Fine. Why don't you see if your elementals can get through?"

James nodded. "That's the plan." He silently called upon Ailward, his stag to help him. He knew that Sirius and Frank couldn't see his elemental. Unless he told the elemental to show himself he couldn't be seen unless one was looking for it. If one was looking for it they might see the quick flash of coloured light but nothing more. He ordered Ailward to try to understand the wall, where its focus was and how one would be able to break through it. It took the elemental less than five minutes to figure it out and inform James of what had to be done. "Alright, it's set."

"Meaning?" Sirius asked, as his eyes travelled over the wall.

"It's a mystical barrier set to kill anyone who tries to go through it. The slice of knives is painful but the closer one gets the sharper the blade so to speak. Eventually the pain becomes so unbearable that most would turn back." He explained.

Frank nodded as he scratched his chin. "Very reassuring. So what do we do about it?"

"Good question," Sirius replied. "Prongs, how do we get rid of the wall?"

James shrugged. "I'm not sure. I think I might be able to do it with my elementals but the problem is that I still have to go through the wall."



Sirius paled. "And experience the unbearable pain right?"

James nodded. "Yeah. I can use my powers to limit the pain to a certain extent, but in the end I've got to go through it. You two can't stop me either; otherwise we'll have to start all over again and that's hardly going to get us anywhere."

"Got it." Sirius replied. "We've got your back."

James nodded and he took a deep breath. He set his elementals around him to destroy the wall and leave a doorway. He then made sure he had one elemental there to help him bear the pain of what he was going to do before he started to move forward. The pain was sharp and quick and it felt like knives slicing at his skin. He wondered if it was only going to be a feeling of intense pain the farther in he went but he changed his mind when he felt his skin rip open with the first slice across his abdomen. His breath heaved out in pain but he continued to move forward.

Sirius and Frank watched him, wincing as the blood and cuts shot through him the closer he moved. The mystical barrier was flashing different colours now and Sirius hoped that it meant it was breaking down slowly.

"Damn, that has to be painful," he muttered under his breath.

"Do you think we can follow behind him a bit?" Frank asked just before James screamed in pain from the huge gash that erupted in his thigh.

"Fuck this!" Sirius exclaimed.

"Don't move!" James yelled. "I'm fine! The barrier is breaking!"

"Yeah, and bloody killing you along with it! Prongs, do you have any idea how much blood you're losing at the moment?" Sirius exclaimed.

James didn't have to know the exact the amount. He could feel the blood dripping from his arms and his thighs and his entire body. He

could barely stand upright from the pain. But at the same time, he could feel the barrier disintegrating. His blood was the key. The closer he moved, the more blood he lost; the more it was absorbed into the barrier, which in turn was the key to opening it. The barrier needed a blood sacrifice. He just hoped that it didn't need too much more blood because he wasn't sure how much longer he could stay standing.

He must have lost enough because the barrier collapsed and he felt himself fall right through it. Sirius and Frank managed to grab him before he crashed face down into the stone.

"I think ... I got it."

Sirius glared at him. "If you weren't bleeding everywhere, I'd kill you myself!"

James ignored him and used his elementals to stop the bleeding and heal the cuts on his body. "I'm fine. Now let's do this thing. I want to go home and be with my wife and daughter."

Frank nodded. "Yeah, let's do this thing."

The three of them stepped towards the glass coffin and stared down at the cup. It was more beautiful than they had ever imagined. It was solid gold and stood about four inches high. The basin of the cup was deep and large. It had intricate designs on the sides and a picture of a badger.

Sirius grinned. "So who says we just smash our fists through the glass?"

Frank laughed. "I don't think that would work. That would be too easy."

Sirius sighed and tapped his wand against the glass. "Figured as much." He ran his hand over the glass, feeling for anything out of the ordinary. He wasn't sure what he was looking for but he remembered that when Dumbledore had given him the locket there had been dark spells intertwined together holding the horcrux inside. But this time he felt nothing of the sort. "It feels clean to me."

James nodded. "Yeah me too."

Frank fell to his knees and looked under the coffin. "There's a latch beneath the cup, directly beneath it here. If we could break the lock, the cup would fall into our hands."

Sirius snorted. "No way did Moldieshorts make it that easy!"

James shrugged. "It's worth a try right. What have you got Frank?"

Frank felt around for the lock and he grinned. His tongue stuck out of the side of his mouth slightly as he concentrated. "It's an ornate lock and has a key pad or something."

James' eyes widened. "He used a muggle security device? No way." He fell to his knees next to Frank and looked beneath it. "Damn it, Padfoot, look at this! He's got laser beams inside of the coffin so that if someone breaks in the lasers set off an alarm and can burn the skin off the person who grabs it. It's completely rigged."

"I bet it's rigged in more than a muggle way. We probably can't use Accio on it either right?" Sirius asked as he felt around for the lock. "But I'm not completely out of the loop. I remember how to play with wires."

Frank rolled his eyes. "Please, don't tell me you still remember how to hot wire a car and break down alarm systems?"

Sirius grinned broadly. "Some things just stay with you."

He fell onto his stomach and began to work carefully with the wires. He pulled out his pocket knife as he studied the structures. He had only broken into a few places in his teens, mostly just to prove that he could and to piss his parents off. It had been fun learning how to do it a muggle way. But he remembered easily how to take apart an alarm system. One just had to know what wires to cut. If he cut the wrong one he knew the alarm would sound and then they could only guess at what would come out at them. He carefully pried the wires apart, the knife between his teeth. He was positive it was the yellow one

and the white one that would disable everything. He took the knife and he snipped them both, the white one first. The little red light turned green and then it shut off.

He slid out from beneath the coffin. "See? Some things just stay with you."

Frank grinned. "I'm still not going to forget the time you hot wired my car."

Sirius shrugged. "Worth a shot. So now what?"

James shrugged. "Well, he's got to have more than the alarm system. There's no way that Voldemort is going to trust a muggle device to keep a piece of his soul safe. There has to be something else here."

"You can say that again," Sirius murmured. "But what else?"

"Let's break the glass and find out," Frank replied. He used his fist to smash through the glass and he picked up the cup.

"Well," Sirius grinned. "That was easy."

James shook his head as they glanced at their friend. "I'm not so sure."

Frank's hand was burning. His grip was firmly on the cup but they could see the blistering of his skin the tighter that he held on. "Destroy it, Potter. Destroy it now!" He hissed through the pain.

James nodded and he asked his elementals to destroy the evil inside of the cup like they had done before. He could feel the energy surrounding him and then the shot of power fly out and a mass of green smoke erupted from the cup, disintegrating into millions of pieces.

Sirius grinned. "And it's gone, baby!"

Frank gasped as the cup fell from his hands. His skin was still blistered and bruised. "It's gone?"

James nodded. "Yeah, at least that's how it disappeared before. Let's get out of here."

Sirius held the cup in his hands. "Works for me. But I must say, finding and destroying that Horcrux was a bit too easy, you know?"

Frank nodded as he let James heal his hand. "I know. I keep waiting for something else to happen."

"Maybe it was one of his first ones. I mean so far, the worst one seems to be the one that Aberforth went for. From what Dumbledore said, he had to fight some Inferius but fire drives them away." James explained. "Maybe he just doesn't concern himself too much with them because he doesn't believe anyone will learn about them."

Sirius nodded. "He believes himself to be invincible. Well, being nearly destructible must be cool. I can see why he would think that."

James nodded. "In the meantime, let's get the hell out of here."

The three of them Disapparated quickly into Hogsmeade and then headed back up to the castle. Once they were in Dumbledore's office they gave him the cup and explained what had happened.

"An alarm system?" Dumbledore asked with a grin, his eyes twinkling in amusement. "Now that is interesting."

Sirius grinned. "We certainly thought so. It was set to burn anyone with laser beams if they didn't disconnect it."

"But he still used magic right off the bat," Frank explained. "We needed a blood sacrifice to get in."

"A lot of blood." James replied, sitting down. He still felt a bit woozy and disoriented from the loss of blood.

"Prongs here healed himself, but he's definitely going to need some blood replenishing potions." Sirius explained as he looked at his friend's pale face. "He lost a whole lot of blood."

Dumbledore nodded. "Bring him to Poppy then, and she'll make sure he's good to go home. In the meantime, another one is destroyed. We're a step closer and that's a good thing. The next meeting we'll work out what step needs to be taken next."

Sirius, Frank, and James all nodded. They said goodnight and headed down to the hospital wing so that Madam Pomfrey could look them all over.

"I'm glad that's over. One more is destroyed and that's a good feeling," Frank replied as they stepped into the hospital wing. "It will definitely make Ice feel better about bringing another baby into the world."

Sirius and James turned to look at him. "Alice is pregnant?"

Frank grinned. "Yeah, three months now. I just found out yesterday. Isn't that wonderful?"

Sirius grinned. "Damn, we're all just popping out the kids, ain't we?"

James laughed. "Yeah, congratulations Frank! That's great! When are you going to tell Neville?"

He shrugged. "School's got three weeks left so we figured we'd just wait."

"We're really very happy for you."

Sirius grinned. "Hey, can I be godfather?"

Frank rolled his eyes. "No."

Sirius shrugged. "Just a suggestion. You're never going to forget the car are you?" At Frank's blank stare he sighed. "Okay, now back to the important part ... do you really think Remus is sexier than me?"

James groaned. "You or me?"

Frank grinned. "Let's do it together."

They both turned and pushed him down onto the floor.

"Get over it!" James demanded and then he turned and walked away, leaving his friend on the floor, a grin on his face.

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Exams finished up quickly and Harry just grinned at thought of going home for the summer. He hoped that the Weasleys would be coming to stay and maybe he could have a party or something for his birthday. His thoughts were mostly just fluffy ones when he felt the mirror heat up in his pocket. He pulled it out and his smile disappeared when he saw Sirius' panicked face.

"Uncle Sirius what's wrong?"

"I, I ... Lexy is ... the baby ... its coming now."

"But she's not due for another four weeks!" Harry exclaimed.

"Now!" Sirius replied before he disappeared from the mirror.

Harry bolted towards the castle, practically running into Ginny who had been on her way to meet him near the lake.

"Harry! Where's the fire?"

"Lexy's having the baby."

Ginny grinned. "Really?" She grabbed his hand and they both hurried up to the suite.

Sirius opened the door, paler than a ghost. "Come in."

Ginny laughed and hugged him. "Stop worrying, you're going to be fine."

They went inside the bedroom where Madam Pomfrey was sitting

with Lexy. "You're vitals are good and it's almost time for you to start pushing."

"It's too early," she murmured.

Madam Pomfrey smiled. "It's alright honey; we can take good care of her when she comes out. She's healthy and she's ready to be born."

Lexy nodded and gripped Sirius' hand in hers. "I can get out of this bed, right?"

He laughed. "Right away."

Harry and Ginny each kissed Lexy's cheek before they went into the common room. James, Lily, Lyra, Remus, Tonks, Daniel, McGonagall, Draco, Frank, and Alice arrived soon after. They all sat there waiting to see what would happen next.

Sirius knelt next to the bed, holding his wife's hand as he told her to breathe. It had been hours and hours and he just wanted his baby to be there. He wanted the pain to stop on his wife, and on his hand. He moved down towards the end of the bed to see. He wanted to watch his daughter come out. He took one look at the blood and the little bit of dark hair coming out of his wife and he passed out cold.

He woke up five minutes later to a loud cry and he stumbled to his feet.

"Lex?"

Madam Pomfrey smiled at him. "You have a daughter, Sirius."

Sirius watched as Madam Pomfrey cleaned her up and wrapped her in a pink blanket before she handed her over to Lexy. He sat down on the edge of the bed and grinned stupidly down at them. "She's beautiful."

Lexy nodded, turning to smile at her husband. "You can say it. She looks like a scrunched up potato."



He laughed. "I already learned from Harry and Daniel that that changes. We've got a daughter."

She smiled. "Why don't you bring her out into the common room and introduce her to her honorary family?"

Sirius laughed. "Minerva mentioned it, eh?"

She smiled and kissed him softly. "I think it's sweet. Go on."

He took the tiny bundle into his arms and headed out of the bedroom. She was sleeping soundly and he grinned broadly when everyone turned to look at him. "Everyone, I'd like for you to meet my daughter, Keira Ginevra Black."

Ginny gasped in surprise. "Ginevra, really?"

Sirius grinned at her. "Yeah really."

McGonagall stepped forward and looked down at the baby. "She's beautiful, Sirius."

He grinned at her and placed the tiny bundle in her arms. "She's anxious to meet her grandma."

Tears welled up in McGonagall's eyes. "Thank you."

James grinned at him. "Another addition to the Marauders."

Lily rolled her eyes. "Merlin, help us all."

They all laughed and Harry just grinned. This was his family now and it was nice to see everyone so happy. It was, overall, the perfect way to end another school year.

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## Chapter 85: Loose Ends

**Author's Notes:** thanks for the help with ideas - u kno who u are ppl lol  
thanks and plz review!

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## Chapter Eighty-Five — Loose Ends

She sat at his feet, her long hair, the colour of blood, tangled down her back. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she trembled. The chains on her arms and legs hurt from where they had rubbed at her skin and she couldn't move from the pain of it. She didn't want to look up at him, the scary man with the red eyes and the so very white skin. He was creepy and mean and she was afraid. His wand pointed at her and she felt her head move towards him not of her own will.

"Mira, I am getting tired of these little games," he replied, his voice cold and sharp and his eyes flashing.

She whimpered and tried to cover her face with her hands but the chains were too heavy.

"I'll have to punish you again if you don't tell me what it is I want to know."

She didn't understand what it was that he wanted but he didn't listen to her. She heard the whimpers but she refused to look towards the doorway. His long-fingered hands grabbed her, forcing her to look at the naked man as he was dragged across the floor in chains. His hair was dark brown and scraggly as it hung down his shoulders. He was dirty and there was blood on his arms and legs. She watched in horror as the pretty black-haired woman nailed him to the wall. The man screamed and screamed. She tried to close her eyes to block out the scene but *He* wouldn't let her. She watched as the woman pointed her wand at him and horrible things happened, horrible things that she didn't want to see.

"STOP!" She cried out, tears pouring down her cheeks.

Voldemort smiled as he turned to look at her, his hands caressing her head. "That's right, Mira; tell the lord what you saw in that pretty little

head?"

She gulped and closed her eyes, trying to tell him the truth that he never believed. "I don't remember." Then she screamed when pain erupted in her body until she blacked out.

\*\*\*\*\*

Sirius watched his wife sleep soundly in the big bed as he held the tiny baby in his arms. He couldn't believe that he was a father. It had only been two days and he was still so overwhelmed. She was so tiny, smaller than either Harry or Daniel had been. He was afraid that he was going to break her. Her tiny hand held onto his finger and he grinned. She was beautiful; the most beautiful little baby that he had ever seen. Of course, he wasn't prejudiced, he just *knew* these things.

Her hair was as black as his but Lexy said that it might change colour and her eyes were a bright blinding blue. He was told that those might change as well, which he found odd. Why did everything change on a kid? Why couldn't they just stay the same? He shook the thoughts from his mind and climbed back into bed with his wife, moving Keira so that she was snuggled comfortably against his heart, his arms wrapped around her.

Lexy turned to grin at him. "Morning."

"Good morning. I heard her wake up."

She laughed. "More like you woke her up. She seems content though." She moved closer and ran her hand over her daughter's back. Sirius hadn't been able to stop touching her and kissing her and holding her. She had already caught him twice just watching their daughter sleep with a look of pure happiness on his face. She knew that Keira hadn't woken up on her own. "Right, sweetheart?" She murmured, leaning over to kiss her cheek.

Keira yawned and Sirius grinned, lifting his head to kiss the top of hers. "She's beautiful. I can't believe we have a daughter."

Lexy grinned and kissed her husband softly. "We do and she's

wonderful. Thank you.”

“For what?” He asked, giving her a puzzled look.

“For keeping me sane and putting up with me these last weeks and everything.”

He smiled. “I’d do it again in a heartbeat. You gave me our daughter, there’s nothing that I can do to make up for that.”

“I love you, Sirius.”

He grinned and kissed her softly. “I love you, too.”

\*\*\*\*\*

*Draco sat beneath the giant willow tree near the lake flipping through the pages of his journal. He had fifteen days until he would be marrying Pansy. Fifteen days left of his life. He closed his eyes and buried his face in his hands. He was beyond hope that he could get out of it now. But every night before he went to sleep he dreamed of that kiss with Delilah. It was her name he murmured in his sleep, much to the amusement of Blaise and Ted. He sighed and didn’t even glance up when the shadow fell over him.*

*“I’m not in the mood to chat; I’m a little too busy trying to think of not getting married.”*

*He heard someone sit down next to him. “Too bad really. I’m kind of in the mood to chat.”*

*He turned to look over at the voice that had been haunting his dreams all year and he grinned. “Well, I always got time for you. I thought maybe that it was Potter again.”*

*Delilah tossed her hair over her should and grinned at him. “He’s a bit worried about you. You know, Professors Black and Black have that beautiful little baby girl that they’ve been proudly showing everyone, but I haven’t really seen you around there.”*

*“Keira? Yeah, she’s a sweetheart but I just ... fifteen days.”*

*She nodded and leaned back against the tree. “I guess so. Kind of sucks really? We play this Truth or Dare game and you get me all wound up with this really great kiss that has made me have all sorts of sweaty dreams at night and here I can’t have you.”*

*Draco’s eyes widened as he looked at her. “You did say that you liked me but I just ... I thought maybe it wasn’t the way I wanted you too ... hell, it doesn’t matter.”*

*She took his face in her hands so that he looked into her eyes. “It does matter. I’ve been so horrible to you all year. My father told me that the Malfoys were a rich, pureblood family that thought they were better than everyone else and how you could get away with everything. You were shallow and conceited and mean to first years and others but this year you changed. I saw the change but I didn’t want to admit it to myself. Draco, your father is the reason my mother’s dead.”*

*“I know that. I saw it Delilah. I didn’t remember at first but when you said it ... I witnessed it and I pushed it out of my mind. It was the first time that I had ever seen my father hurt anyone other than my mother and I and ... that was kind of it for me, when I realized that he’s not the hero I thought he was.” He explained. “I’m sorry for what he did and I’m sorry that I didn’t do anything to stop him.”*

*“It’s not your fault, Draco. I know that. It was just easier to blame you.” She took his hand in hers and held it to her cheek. “It made it easier to pretend that I didn’t have feelings for you.”*

*He brushed her bangs out of her eyes and leaned closer. “I’ve got fifteen days.”*

*She slid into his lap, straddling him as he leaned back against the tree. “Fifteen days works for me.” Then she crushed her mouth to his.*

Draco bolted upright in bed extremely hot and bothered. He had been having dreams such as that one on and off since the Truth or Dare game. He always woke up right before the kiss got good, right before

it could move into anything. He leaned back against his pillows and ran a hand over his face. What had woken him anyway? He adjusted his eyes to the dark as he blinked around the room but nothing was there. He could hear Blaise's snores and Daphne's quiet breathing as the two had taken to cuddling in Blaise's bed at night. Ted snored even louder but the room was silent. He shrugged and headed into the bathroom. He was never going to get back to sleep.

He stepped under the hot spray and just let the water beat down on him. He wasn't sure what he was going to do. He had been so depressed for the last few weeks. He couldn't stop thinking about Delilah and that kiss. She had admitted to having feelings for him and he knew that it hadn't been a dream. But she had been subtly avoiding him for weeks. Now exams were over and there were only a few days left of school and he felt like his life was over. He had lost his chance.

He dried off and quickly dried his hair, brushing it back. It fell loosely around his face as he looked at himself in the mirror. He still habitually slicked it back as that had been the way his father had wanted him to wear it. His hair was cut similar to Sirius' and he had always loved the way his professor wore it. That casual look that just fell over his eyes. His own hair did that naturally when he didn't slick it back. He grinned at himself in the mirror. He liked it that way and after all, it was his life. He was going to change in more ways.

He left his hair the way it was before he brushed his teeth and got dressed. He headed down into the common room. It was still fairly early and he knew that everyone else wouldn't be getting up for another half hour or so, especially since exams were over.

He was just entering the Great Hall when an owl caught his eye. He turned and gulped at the familiar greyish bird and accepted the letter. He unscrolled it and then took a deep breath before he began to read:

**Draco,**

**As you know, you're wedding to Miss Parkinson will be taking place on the 9th July. I have already discussed the unfortunate**

situation in which you have placed your mother and I in with Roger Parkinson. Even though the Potters have decided to make you their *ward*, I hope that you can still remember who your true family is.

Spending your time with misfits and half-breeds, blood-traitors and half-bloods — I'm ashamed to call you my son. However, I shall be present at the ceremony and I expect you to present yourself in a respectable manner and show proper behaviour. You are to work on making an heir immediately. Pansy knows her place, Draco, something that you should learn from her.

I have nothing more to say.

Draco crumpled the letter and swore silently. He didn't want to bloody-well get married! He didn't want to marry Pansy and wasn't that the difference? He took a seat in the Great Hall and his eyes lit up when he noticed Delilah sitting at the Slytherin table alone. There were only about fifteen students over all who were awake.

He took a seat next to her and grinned. "Good morning."

She turned to look over at him in surprise. "Good morning."

"You've been avoiding me."

She looked like she was going to argue and then changed her mind. "Yes. I just ... I didn't know what to say."

Draco nodded and helped himself to some pancakes. "I guess, I don't blame you. The girl I've wanted all year finally admits she has feelings for me and I'm getting married in fifteen days. My life sucks."

Delilah chuckled. "That's kind of why I've been avoiding you."

"I get that. So ..."

She grinned. "I do like you, Draco, I wasn't lying in there. I just ... I've spent pretty much my entire life learning to hate the Malfoy family. I think I was afraid of what I was feeling and then, well ... you showed

me that you're nothing like your family and that made it worse because of how I treated you."

"I understand even though I ... my father ... you had a reason to hate me."

She smiled and tucked a strand of hair out of her eyes. "I suppose. It doesn't make it right though." She sighed. "This sucks."

He laughed and took her hand in his. "It really does. You're the most beautiful person I know and ... then there's Pansy ... she ruins everything."

"Pansy doesn't deserve you. I'm sorry it took me so long to realize that."

He smiled and his head tilted down to her forehead. "It's alright, you know it now."

"I like you're hair like this. It suits you and it's different. You have the most beautiful eyes, greyish-blue," she murmured.

"I can't stop thinking about that kiss."

"Me neither," she breathed.

Their lips were only inches apart and she could feel the whisper of his breath as he spoke. "It's not fair. It's you I want to be with."

Her hands let go of his and dug gently into his hips. "But you're getting married, do you really have to get married?"

He nodded. "Yeah, the only way to get out is to be engaged to someone else. I've got no choice, Delilah."

She licked her lips and nodded. He wasn't sure who moved in for the final swoop but his lips were on hers and all he knew was that she tasted amazing. His hands slid around her waist as his lips met hers in soft, greedy bites and she melted against him.



This is what she had been dreaming about since that Truth or Dare game, the feel of his lips on hers. She wasn't sure what she was doing. If her father ever found out the feelings that she was having for Draco Malfoy he would surely kill her; but it was Draco she wanted. Nothing was going to change that. He was getting married and she didn't even care. She climbed into his lap in an attempt to get closer to him and he groaned against her neck.

On some level he knew that they were in the middle of the Great Hall and deserted or not they were asking for trouble once a professor showed up but he couldn't stop. She tasted so good and her small, tight body was pressed against his and he was in heaven. It was her he had been waiting for. She was what he wanted. He knew nothing of what was going on around him, he was lost in her.

This was why he yelped in surprise when someone grabbed a fistful of his hair and yanked him back.

"Draco, what is the meaning of this altercation with this tramp?" Pansy demanded. Her voice was surprisingly quiet and very calm.

He glared at her. "Its meaning is to make me happy, something you can't accomplish. Now, go away."

"Ugh! Could you *be* any ruder to me? I'm your fiancée and I deserve to be treated with respect! We're getting married in fifteen days, Draco!" She exclaimed, sobbing now.

Draco rolled his eyes. He knew Pansy and he knew her moves like the back of his hand. She could turn on the water works anytime she wanted. "Yeah, unfortunately, but I'll find a way to get around it. Give me time."

Delilah moved closer to Draco, his cologne tickling her nose. Her eyes met his and she found herself nodding. "Yeah, he will."

Pansy smirked. "There is no way out of it, Knight! Draco here is just joking. He wants me badly but doesn't want to admit it. He's afraid it will get to his head."

He rolled his eyes. "Right, that's the problem."

Delilah nodded and then she took his hand in hers. "Do you want to go for a walk?"

"Do what?" Pansy exclaimed. "Delilah Knight! You don't have the right!"

Delilah rolled her eyes and climbed off of Draco's lap, oblivious to the people that were slowly filling up the Great Hall. She offered her hand out to him and he grinned. "Well?"

He took her hand in his and they headed outside. The morning sun was bright and the grass still wet with morning dew. Draco used a drying charm on the grass and they took a seat under the giant willow tree.

"So, I guess, maybe we should talk," he murmured, grinning when Delilah leaned back against him, wrapping his arms around her waist.

"About what? How this relationship is doomed to fail?"

He sighed and gently nuzzled her neck. "Yes, or about how I'm in love with you."

Her head whipped around so fast that if he hadn't cocked his head to the side it would have been a very painful situation.

"You're what?"

"In love with you," he repeated, reaching out to brush a strand of hair out of her face. "I know it's ridiculous and that you probably think I'm insane since we barely know each other, but being with you or even near you makes me happy. You make me feel whole. Besides, I do know a little bit about you."

She smiled now. "Like what?"

"Like that you have a bad temper and get angry easily. I also know that you don't care what people think about you. That's something I

admire because I do care what others think. I try not to but ... it's hard as I was kind of the centre of popularity with all those people I called friends ... but now I may miss it and not like being talked about by Pansy and her freaky group of friends, but I've never been happier."

She smiled and kissed him softly. "Okay, so you know I have a bad temper. I don't really, at least not around anyone else. You just made me angry ... well sort of."

"What do you mean?" He asked.

She shrugged. "Sometimes I think I got so angry at you this year because I was attracted to you. It scared me ... especially considering what I know about your father."

"Delilah ... I can't imagine how hard this must be for you but I ... I am not my father and I didn't have anything to do with what happened to your mother." He replied as he held her in his arms.

"I know that," she murmured. "I'm just explaining about before. I think I've always known really but it scared me ... my father hates your entire family, Draco, and the idea that what I was feeling ... well, it took me a little while to admit it to myself."

He grinned. "Then to admit to me."

She nodded. "Yeah. Okay, so more about me. Um ... I'm an only child and I live with my father, Jonathon Knight. He never remarried and is very protective over me. I have no idea how he's going to react when he finds out that I'm sitting here snuggled with a Malfoy, probably disown me but I can work around that." She grinned. "I've got him wrapped around my finger, he just doesn't know it."

Draco laughed. "Daddy's girl, eh?"

"Yes. Um ... I'm very intelligent and have an O++ average, second highest in our year only to Ginny. I don't mean to brag but I don't work for my grades and it makes my friends a bit jealous so I thought you should know. It just comes naturally. I have no idea what I would like to do with my life; but something in law enforcement, I think would be

good like an Auror or a Law Enforcer or maybe even an Unspeakable. Um ... my best friend is Mandy Bradshaw and she's a typical Slytherin ... cunning, clever, and I'd obviously never tell her any secrets because she has the biggest mouth!"

He laughed. "Sounds like it."

"Anything else you'd like to know?" She asked, her lips inches from his.

"Yeah, I'd like to know why the hell you won't leave my fiancée alone?" Pansy demanded as she stood over them. Her friends, Avena Penn and Mala Crafton, stood behind her glaring.

Delilah rolled her eyes as Draco tugged her into his lap. "Because I don't want her to. Go away, Pansy."

"No! I'm not just going to leave you here to be all ... cheating on me and ... damn it! Draco, we're getting married! It should be me you're with not her!" She exclaimed, throwing her hands up in the air.

Draco sighed as he watched her turn on the water works again. "I'm not married to you yet, will you just leave me alone?"

She glared at him. "No, I will not just leave you alone! It was a binding agreement, Draco, and even if you don't love me you don't have a choice!" She grinned now. "You're father's going to make sure of that." She held out the letter in hand. Draco snatched it from her and began to read:

**My Dearest Pansy,**

**My wife and I are filled with nothing but joy upon the idea that you shall be married to our son in only two weeks time. We know that it must be trying for you to have to put up with his childish antics, but I assure you that there is nothing he can possibly do to get out of the wedding. The only two things he can do, he won't as a) he doesn't have the guts and, b) there's no way it can happen in so little time left.**

**I know that you will be very helpful in helping to provide both your parents and myself in a suitable pureblood heir to carry on the noble Malfoy name. Consummating the marriage is very important my dear and knowing my son's intolerable attitude he might try to get out of it, as I'm sure you're aware of the law that if a marriage isn't consummated within the first three months, he has the right to divorce you. I have a wonderful little potion that will correct that problem. Your wedding will be a fairy tale, a wonderful dream come true ... I promise you. There's NOTHING my son can do to stop it.**

**Affectionately,  
Lucius**

Draco tossed the letter on to the grass and glared at her. "This doesn't scare me, Pansy. I know what both of those options are and he doesn't know me. He has no idea what I'm capable of."

Pansy smirked. "You can have your little fling, Draco, but once we're married I won't tolerate you making *her* your mistress. Remember that." She snapped her fingers and Avena and Mala sneered at them before they followed her.

"Sorry about her, she's ..." He trailed off, unsure of how to describe her other than self-centred bitch.

Delilah smiled. "It's alright." She closed her eyes for a moment and straddled him. "This isn't fair."

He nodded, keeping his hands on her waist. "My life never is."

She nodded and promptly changed the subject. "Tell me a bit about yourself. Do you have any pets?"

He laughed and kissed the tip of her nose. "No. I always wanted a dog though."

She smiled. "You can get one when you get your own house and name him oh, I don't know ... Bruno."

“Bruno the dog; sounds good.”

Her smile faded as she watched his eyes light up in laughter. “We can’t do this.”

“I know ... it’s not ... it’s not fair.”

“Not to either of us.” She cupped his cheek gently in her hands. “I like you, Draco, but you’re getting married and the only way I could possibly change that ... fifteen days isn’t enough time to fall in love with you.”

He nodded. “I know.”

He leaned in to kiss her softly and she sighed against him as their lips met. When she pulled back, there were tears in her eyes. “I’ll see you around.”

She slid off his lap and hurried off. He watched her go and he felt like his heart had been ripped from his chest.

Delilah ran all the way back to the school. Her heart was pounding and she felt broken in some way. She felt like she had just lost an important part of herself. She leaned back against the wall of the school as tears rolled down her cheeks when a shadow fell over her. She gasped in surprise and quickly wiped at the tears.

“It’s alright to cry, Miss Knight,” a soft voice replied.

She looked up into the familiar twinkling blue eyes. “It doesn’t matter now.”

Dumbledore smiled kindly. “I think you’re wrong. Come with me for a moment.”

He turned and headed down the hallways as she stared after him curiously. Why would the Headmaster want to speak with her? She followed him up to his office and took a seat.

“What would you like to see me for, Professor?”

Dumbledore smiled. "I take great pride in my students, Miss Knight. I watch from a distance and I see the romances and the fights and the arguments. You and Mr. Malfoy have been very intriguing to see. That kiss in the Great Hall this morning especially."

She blushed. "I'm sorry, Professor, I know that kissing in the Great Hall is against the rules and that I —"

He held up a hand to quiet her. "You're not in trouble, Miss Knight. I know what happened to your mother, Mr. Malfoy told me some time ago. I understand why it was that you put him off for so long but now you have a decision to make. Mr. Malfoy has made his decision. He does not want to work for Voldemort but for the Order, an organization that you yourself are an important part of. James and Lily Potter have taken him in and given him a home but the one thing that they weren't able to do for him was get him out of his betrothment."

Delilah felt her eyes fill up again and she angrily blinked them back. "I know, sir."

"But there is a way out of it my dear, a way for the two of you to be happy together."

"How? He said he had to find someone else to love or something."

Dumbledore nodded. "Exactly. If Draco is in love with someone else and that person agrees to marry him then they have to get engaged before his wedding. It becomes a legal binding contract with no way out but you have two years until the marriage has to be made legal. He has an heirloom that can accomplish that and I know for a fact he hasn't given it to Miss Parkinson yet."

Delilah's mouth dropped open and when she stood up, she was shaking. "Professor, I can't marry him! He loves me yes but I don't love him! I like him, I fancy him even but love ... it hasn't come to that yet!"

"But it could over time if you gave it a chance, Delilah. Miss Parkinson

is not the woman for Mr. Malfoy. She loves him, yes, in her own way but it's not a good love. He can't stand her and the marriage that those two will be forced to have will be horrible for both of them. Mr. Malfoy will not stay faithful and it will hurt his wife. It will cause more pain and heartache in the end. You could change that." He explained.

Delilah shook her head as she stared at him. "How can I know, Professor? How will I know that I will come to love him? I could make the biggest mistake of my life!"

Dumbledore smiled. "You don't know. But you could also be making the best decision of your life. I think there's someone who can help you out there." He picked up a large portrait off his desk and stood it down on the floor. The portrait was of a beautiful redhead with big hazel eyes. "This is Lady Gwendolynn Potter, the former Duchess of Draíochta. I borrowed the portrait from the home of James Potter. I believe that she can answer your questions."

Gwendolynn smiled warmly at her. "Dumbledore seems to think that I can be of assistance to you, my dear. How can I help you?"

Delilah shrugged. "I-I'm not sure."

Dumbledore grinned. "Lady Potter, why don't you tell her about you and Andrew and how your marriage was arranged? I'll leave you two alone for a bit, shall I?"

Delilah watched him leave the room before she took a seat. "You had an arranged marriage?"

Gwendolynn nodded. "Aye I did. Times were a bit different back then but I did. Andrew Potter had a terrible crush on me and I ignored him a bit as the whole school knew that he was betrothed to Roberta Vane. Well, when we were in our sixth year, I learned that the betrothment was more tentative as his parents wanted him to be happy and to find someone who would make him happy but if he didn't find someone by his wedding date then he would have to marry Roberta Vane. She was a rude, mean-tempered girl, though incredibly beautiful. Anyway, to make a long story short, I started to fancy Andy soon before his wedding. I knew that if I wanted a chance



with him I had to become his fiancée, something I was terribly nervous about. He loved me but I didn't love him and what if I never grew to love him? Both of us still had a year left of school as well and it seemed like a terrible decision."

"What did you do?" Delilah asked; her interest peaked in the similarity of the situation.

Gwendolynn smiled. "I used a Prospective Glass. Dumbledore, the Transfiguration teacher during my time, kept one in his classroom. I asked him if I could view it. He was hesitant at first as it's not normally wise to allow people to see into it but he let me. What I saw helped me make my decision."

"What did you see?" Delilah asked.

Gwendolynn smiled. "My life."

Delilah left the office a few moments later lost in thought. Of course she liked Draco, he was handsome and sweet and funny and a little dangerous and cocky which naturally attracted her but ... did she love him? She thought maybe that she could come to love him in time but not in fifteen days. She wandered around the school for over three hours before she returned to Dumbledore's office. She needed to see the Prospective Glass.

Dumbledore smiled at her when she stepped inside. "I had a feeling that you would return."

Delilah nodded her throat was dry as dust. "I think I need to ... I need to know."

He nodded and held out an ornate looking mirror but when she looked into she saw nothing.

"This is the Prospective Glass. To see what you want you just have to think hard about your dilemma and it will show you both possibilities. It may or may not be true as it depends on your decision from there on." Dumbledore explained. "Do you understand?"

She nodded as she held the glass in her hands. "Yes."

"Good."

He left her alone in his office as she stared down at the mirror. She thought hard about what she wanted, about Draco, and about the whole decision. She felt a tiny jerk at her naval and a few seconds later she was clutching the mirror to her chest as she fell into a beautiful room. Flowers filled the room and she knew as she looked around that it was her home. She stopped in her tracks when she heard voices.

*"Give that back, Dillon!" A dark-haired boy exclaimed as he rushed into the room. His hair was as dark as her own but he had gorgeous grey eyes that looked so familiar. The boy was tall and lanky as if he had just gone through a huge growth spurt. He glared at the blonde-haired boy who was holding the letter.*

*"Oh stuff it, Dev, you got into Hogwarts you can stop having a bloody panic attack!" The blonde boy, Dillon exclaimed as he tossed the letter at Dev.*

*Draco stepped into the room then, holding a beautiful little girl in his arms. She was dark-haired too. "What's all the commotion down here? I'm trying to get Miriam to take a nap."*

*"I got in, Dad." Dev replied.*

*"Got in?" Draco asked.*

*He nodded and began to read the letter out loud. "'Dear Mr. Malfoy, we are proud to inform you that you have been accepted at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.'"*

*Draco grinned and hurried forward to hug the boy. "Devin, that's wonderful! Your Mum is going to be so proud."*

*"Why did Fox get to go with her anyway?" Devin asked as he lifted the four-year-old girl from his father's arms.*

*"Because Fox had to go see the healer too, dummy," Dillon replied.*

*Draco gave his son a glare. "Dillon, come on now, be nice to your brother. Being twelve doesn't make you boss."*

*Dillon sighed and rolled his eyes. "Sorry, Dad."*

*A tall, handsome blonde entered the room; he was the mirror image of Draco and looked to be about sixteen. "Hey Dad, any idea where my broomstick is?"*

*Devin blushed. "Um ..."*

*The young blonde man rolled his eyes. "Dev, what did you do with it?"*

*"Sam, I just took it out for a spin. I left it on the table outside."*

*Sam sighed. "It better be in the same shape it was before you got a hold of it."*

*"Samuel James Malfoy! Don't you dare threaten your brother!" Delilah exclaimed from the doorway. A tiny little blonde boy held onto her hand tightly.*

*"Sorry Mum," Sam murmured.*

*Draco grinned and took a step over to kiss her softly. "Welcome home, honey."*

*Delilah smiled. "Welcome home."*

*The scene changed and Delilah found herself in the same room except it was dark and depressing and all of the colour was gone from it. She saw herself step inside of the room in faded blue jeans and a rolled up tee shirt. Draco followed behind her, his hands in his pockets.*

*"I don't know why you're even bothering. I'm telling you this place is a nightmare."*

*“Draco, you may have bad memories here but it’s your family home. It’s been passed down in the Malfoy family for generations. That’s an accomplishment and I think that you would want to enjoy that. We can make this a home.”*

*He grinned as he leaned against the doorjamb, watching her as she carefully dipped the paint brush into the bright gold coloured paint. “I suppose we can. But I’m telling you that when that baby’s born this house will have to get a whole lot better. The kid will probably cry when he sees it. It will just be that depressing!”*

*She laughed. “You prat! We’re going to make sure that it’s not depressing but a home.”*

*Draco stepped up next to her and dipped his finger in the paint, turning her and tapping her nose. “Kay, I’ll get right on that.”*

*“Draco!” She shrieked as the paint dripped off of her nose. She shook her brush in his direction and little paint flecks went flying.*

*He laughed and pulled her down to the floor as he tugged her tee-shirt up over her head. “Hmm, I can paint really well watch.” He dipped his finger in the paint again and began to glide it under her breasts, drawing smiling faces on her tummy. She gasped as he leaned down and used his mouth first, before following the trail of his mouth with the paint.*

*“Draco,” she murmured, tugging at his hair to pull him closer.*

*Their lips met and soon they were lost in each other, rolling over the paint-splattered clothes.*

The scene changed again but this time it was only a few days from the present. She was sitting in the back row of a wedding and Draco was standing at the front looking miserable. She watched as Pansy stepped forward in a beautiful dress and they said their vows. The scene changed again. She was pacing in a room she didn’t recognize until someone knocked on the door. Her image self stomped over and yanked it open.

*"I thought you weren't coming!"*

*Draco shook his head no as he yanked her close to him. "Of course I came! I couldn't get away! I had to help Lucius with his homework." His lips met hers for a long deep kiss. "She knows I come here and she wants me to stay away."*

*Delilah shook her head no. "But you don't love her, it's me ... I love you so much and I know I'm being selfish."*

*"Not selfish enough," he growled. "I wish you'd let me do more for you. You don't deserve to be treated like that ... my mistress ... it's you I want, Delilah, I wish you were my wife. I love you."*

*Tears rolled down her cheeks as she tugged at his shirt. "Me too. Merlin, I want you so much sometimes and it hurts because you're not there."*

*He nodded as she kissed the tears away. "We should run away together. Maybe to North America and we could change our names."*

*She smiled. "What about Lucius? Your son needs you, Draco."*

*He sighed and buried his face in the crook of her neck. "But I need you."*

The scene disappeared and she found herself sitting on the floor of Dumbledore's office, clutching the mirror in her hands, tears in her eyes. She wiped the tears away as she stood up and placed the Prospective Glass back on the headmaster's desk. She knew what she had to do. She just had to know that the risk was worth it.

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Ginny was lying on her back, her head resting in Harry's lap under one of the big trees outside. "It feels nice to know that the year's almost over. Relief on my part, O.W.L.s were just too much."

Harry laughed. "Right, because we all know you failed everything."

She grinned and held her hand out, using her magic to make the lake ripple much like it did when skipping rocks. "Of course I did."

He watched her play with the water, using her wandless magic to make it ripple and splash. He grinned to himself and called forth one of his elementals to splash her with water. She shrieked when the water hit her.

"HARRY!"

He grinned. "What?"

"Don't what me, Mister, I know that was you!"

He shrugged. "I never moved a finger."

"Hmm," she murmured as she glared up at him.

Harry laughed and tugged her towards him so that he could slip his hands under her shirt. "Only one day left of school. We go home tomorrow."

Her head fell back as his hands glided over her bra. "Mmm, I hope we're staying at the manor."

He grinned. "Why so you can make me even crazier?"

Ginny smiled and when she opened her eyes they were dark with pleasure. "Like you do to me on a regular basis?" She moved to straddle him and kissed him softly. "I've been having the most delicious dreams about you lately."

Harry's eyebrow rose in surprise. "Really? Care to share?"

She shook her head as she chewed on her bottom lip. "Nuh-uh, my secret." She nibbled gently on his chin, liking the rough stubble there. "You need to shave."

"I know. I'm experimenting."

Ginny pulled back and grinned at him. The black stubble on his face suited him and it gave him a rough and dangerous look that made her kind of hot and bothered. "Oh yeah? What is this experiment?"

He grinned. "Well, I thought maybe I'd try and grow a beard or something. You know, one of those little goatees — what do you think?"

Ginny wrinkled her nose. "I don't know. I'd have to see it. I like the stubble though ... it's sexy."

"Oh yeah?"

She nodded. "You wouldn't think it would be as it's kind of lazy but it's sexy ... makes you look dangerous." She slid her hands up his chest, popping open a few buttons. "Leave it just like that."

Harry felt his body respond instantly and he growled as he pulled her forward and pressed his lips to hers. She moaned against his mouth, her hands fisting in his shirt as his fingers played with the dangling G she wore in her bellybutton. She tasted so good that he didn't want to stop kissing her. Her scent was driving him mad and the more he touched and tasted the more he ached. He wasn't sure how much longer he could go on without having her until he exploded.

Ginny made quick work of his shirt and spread it wide open, moving her lips down his neck and torturing his skin with soft kisses. She could taste his soap and the sweet smell of his sweat as her lips brushed his skin. They hadn't had time alone together in ages and she knew that this summer was going to be great. She was going to make sure of it.

They broke apart at a loud hoot and Harry glared at Hedwig. "You're killing me, girl."

Hedwig blinked at him as if to say: *Uh-huh*.

"Here's Hedwig," Harry replied. "Didn't you use her to send letters all over the place for Dumbledore?"

Ginny nodded as she sat up, pulling her rumbled shirt down and trying to catch her breath. "Yeah, it's taken them long enough to write back." She stroked Hedwig's wing and accepted the three letters. "I just hope that they're willing to help." She unscrolled them and began to read with Harry reading over her shoulder.

**Dear Ginevra,**

**It was wonderful to hear from you again though I was sad to know that it was on the terms of such terrible news. I thought long and hard before I responded and I'll admit I considered not even responding, as something such as this is very far out of my milieu. I make scent, Beautiful; you know that as I made a perfume with your exact scent in it — does it drive that man of yours crazy? That would tell me of course if I had done my job. I do know many people with many different talents but I'm not sure how I myself would be able to help you. Knowing that Albus Dumbledore respects me enough to think of me however is the main reason why I'm agreeing.**

**I waited to see if I could round anyone up and I've managed to find a few Aurors here who can be helpful. Three of them, we all plan to arrive in England during the summer. This dark lord of yours needs to be stopped and if I can help, then I will. I will contact you again before I arrive.**

**Sincerely,  
Jed**

**P.S. Please tell Emma that threats won't work on me — she is still the fairest beauty in the land.**

**Dear Ginevra,**

**I have heard the terrible news from both you and Emma so I know that it must be bad there. I will of course come immediately as my parents are constantly informing me of how terrible it was during the first war. If I can help then I know I must. Emma has told me to come in the summer so I will be waiting for news. The dark lord must be stopped, before he takes over the**



**world.**

**Leila**

**Dear Ginevra,**

**Your powers are great and I myself know of their greatness since I helped to train you but others are needed. My students and fellow teachers are more than willing to be there to help bring down this force of darkness that I have been feeling it rise for ages. It is getting stronger and we know that any power we can lend to put a stop to it must be done. There will be five plus myself arriving in the summer.**

**Remember your powers and remember to use them. Destroy this letter for safety, but I think you already know to do that.**

**Duna**

“So they’re all coming then?” Harry asked as he watched Ginny fold them up.

She nodded. “Yes.” Ginny concentrated her power and using her fire power sent the three letters up into flames. “We will have help in this war.”

Harry smiled at her. “That’s what we need, people who are willing to fight. The Order is already way bigger then it was before which I’m sure is going to help a whole lot, especially with this horcrux thing.”

“Sirius, James, and Frank found the cup, right?”

He nodded. “So they said. Uncle Sirius mentioned something about a muggle security system which I found completely odd considering Voldemort’s hate for muggles and muggle things but ... who knows? Then there’s that little girl, Mira White ... no one is any closer to finding out what Voldemort has her for. I bet Snape knows something.”

Ginny shrugged. “No idea, but I hope they find her soon ... he has a

way of corruption.”

Harry slipped his arms around her. “Hey, we’ll find out more about why he wants you, too. You never know, it could simply be he wants to know more about the diary and what happened to it. We just don’t know.”

“That’s what gives him power though, isn’t it?” Ginny asked. “By us not knowing ... we know what he’s capable of but we don’t know how his mind works. Then there’s us ... he has no idea what we’re capable of. My powers have grown and we know yours have. You’ve been training with James continually and your elementals are at their fullest power. Wandless magic is simple for us. We both have many different forms to hide under. We’re powerful, Harry, yet neither one of us have been able to really test our skills yet.”

He nodded. “I know. I said as much a little while ago and I was told that my powers should be kept a secret so that Voldemort remains unprepared over what I’m capable of. It makes sense but at the same time I’m tired of being sheltered. I want to help on this horcrux hunt. I don’t want to be kept in the dark any more.”

“I know. I want to help too. Don’t say anything unless you want to be bat bogeyed.”

He grinned. “I can’t help it, I’m sorry.”

She laughed and waved her hand, conjuring a bright red balloon filled with water. “I can help it.”

He laughed as she held the balloon in her hand. “You wouldn’t?”

Ginny grinned wickedly. “Watch me.” And she smashed the balloon into his chest.

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Draco was sitting outside in the courtyard watching as Harry started conjuring water balloons to toss at Ginny. She was holding her own as they chased each other around, throwing the balloons and

laughing when they were drenched in water. They were completely oblivious to everyone but each other and were so happy. He grinned as Harry smashed a particularly large one over Ginny's head and she shrieked before she bolted after him in the afternoon sun. That was what he wanted he realized; that was what he was never going to have.

He looked over when he felt someone plop down next to him. "Hello."

Blaise nodded as his eyes followed Harry and Ginny for a moment. "Hey, how are you doing?"

Draco shrugged. "Other than wanting to kill myself ... fine."

Blaise sighed and looked over at his friend. "I think I'd prefer it if you killed her."

Draco snorted. "Yeah, that would really solve all of my problems. But, I mean, hell, she's annoying and all but she doesn't deserve to die."

"True ... I saw Delilah wandering the halls and she looks pretty miserable."

"Look, Blaise, whatever you're trying to do, it's not helping! How would you feel if you were in love with Daphne but being forced to marry someone else rather than her?"

"Like shit," Blaise murmured. "Draco, I feel for you really but you've got to cheer up a bit, alright."

"I can't."

Blaise grinned as he saw Delilah heading towards them. "Well, not my fault if a beautiful woman can't cheer you up." He slapped Draco on the back as he stood up. "I'll see you later."

Draco watched him go and then he noticed Delilah. He smiled at her and she stood in front of him. "Hi."

"Hi. I've been thinking," she began, twisting her hands together.

He took her hands in his and pulled her down into his lap. "About what?"

She grinned at him. "Things and, well ... will you marry me?"

Draco's mouth dropped open as he stared at her. There was no possible way that he had heard that correctly? Was there? "What?"

She shrugged and slipped her arms around his neck. "You heard me. Will you marry me?"

"Delilah ... what are you ... what do you mean?"

Her eyebrow rose slightly as she gave him an amused look. "I think my meaning is pretty clear. I've been doing a lot of thinking about stuff and well ... I like you a lot and I know that there's a huge chance that I'm going to come to love you. I can see myself falling in love with you, Draco."

"Delilah ... I'm marrying Pansy in fifteen days."

She shook her head. "No, you're not. I'm giving you the chance to get out of it. Marry me instead."

His eyes were wide as he stared at her in shock. "Delilah, I couldn't ... I love you, but you don't love me and I couldn't possibly ask you to do otherwise. It's like I'd be trapping you. If you agree to do this then there's no way out. I mean literally, unless one of us dies. We would have to get married within two years from the day you agreed."

She nodded. "I know." She leaned down and kissed him softly, smiling against his mouth as their lips brushed. "It's a risk that I think is worth taking. Don't you?" She asked, running her hands through the soft blonde locks.

Draco grinned at her. "You were worth the wait."

Delilah smiled. "And you're worth the risk."

He reached beneath his shirt and pulled out a gold chain that he wore around his neck, unhooking it and sliding something off of it. "I've had to wear this since I was four years old. It belonged to my great-grandmother. It was her wedding ring. It's been passed down in my family for generations and I'm supposed to give it to the woman I marry. I never wanted Pansy to wear this. It's a magical ring and once I place the ring on your finger it binds you to me. The ring can't come off until you give it to another heir to wear." The ring was yellow gold with beautiful ornate carvings on the sides of rubies and emeralds and diamonds. It was simple band with no large stone in the centre but it was beautiful. "I'm only going to ask you once more, Delilah."

She grinned at him and held her hand out. "Give me the ring already."

He laughed and slipped it onto her finger. "I love you."

She could feel the warmth on her hand as the ring heated and then it glowed before it disappeared and she looked into his eyes, happiness soaring through her. "I'm going to marry you."

Draco grinned. "Yeah, you are."

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Harry had just finished packing up his trunk when Ginny came running into the dorm. "Harry! You'll never believe what happened?"

He turned to look over at her and grinned. "What's going on?"

She grinned. "Draco doesn't have to marry Pansy."

Harry's mouth dropped open. "What?"

Ginny shook her head and grabbed his hand. "Come see."

She dragged him out of the room and down the hall from the Gryffindor common room. Draco was there, his hand in Delilah's as Pansy stared at them, bubbling up in anger. Her two flunkies, Avena and Mala stood behind her.

“You’ve got no say, Pans! I looked into the contract it wasn’t binding in this sense. I’m going to marry Delilah, and there’s nothing you can do to stop me!”

Pansy glared at him, her eyes practically bugging out of her head. “You are mine! And you don’t have the right to do this! I’ll stop you!”

He grinned. “Try it.” He held up their joined hands and grinned when Pansy shrieked and pointed. “That’s right, she’s got the ring. There’s nothing you can do.”

“THAT RING IS MINE! DRACO, THAT RING BELONGS TO ME!”

Draco shrugged. “And you know what the ring is, Pans, once it’s placed on the finger it can’t come off; it makes a bond on its own. Delilah is my wife in every sense except legally. We’ll make that happen later on.”

Dumbledore stepped forward, using a spell to hold Pansy in place just as she was about to dive at Delilah. “Congratulations, Mr. Malfoy, Miss Knight, however this is not the place or the time for such a discussion. Please follow me to my office where your families are waiting.”

Harry pushed his way towards Draco and grinned. “Mate, this is great!”

Draco grinned. “I know, I couldn’t be happier.”

Dumbledore smiled. “Mr. Potter, Miss Weasley, you may come as well.”

They followed him up to his office where James stood with Lucius Malfoy and two men that Harry didn’t recognize.

Lucius sneered. “What is the meaning of this, Draco?”

A slightly plump man with dark hair nodded. “We had a binding agreement, Malfoy, my daughter and your son!”

James held up his hands. "Ah, but there was a way out. I researched the contract and the betrothment and learned that if Draco became engaged before his wedding day to Miss Parkinson with the intention of getting married within the next two years then he did not have to marry Miss Parkinson."

Mr. Parkinson glared. "So there was a loophole! What right does he have to pull it fifteen days before the wedding?"

Pansy nodded, tears leaking down her cheeks. "Daddy, he's horrible!"

Mr. Parkinson pulled his daughter into his arms, obviously believing her tears. "It's alright, pumpkin, he's not worthy of you anyway." He stormed out of the room, his arms around his daughter.

Lucius turned to glare at James. "This is your fault! You and your bad influence! Now my son is engaged to a filthy half-blood!"

The other man, who Harry now assumed was Delilah's father looked like he planned to step forward but James grabbed Lucius by the front of his robes.

"You're going to learn how to show respect towards others! That *filthy half-blood* is the love of your son's life!" He yanked him up again and he choked a bit at the tightness of his robes around his neck. "Considering what you did to that girl's mother I'm surprised her father isn't killing you on the spot!"

He let go and Lucius stumbled back, rubbing his neck. "You'll pay for this, Potter." Then he turned and stormed out of the office.

Jonathon Knight stepped forward then and Delilah stepped in front of him. "Daddy."

He sighed as he looked down at her. "A Malfoy, Del?"

She laughed. "It wasn't intentional. I tried to hate him really."

He grinned and pulled her close, kissing the top of her head before his eyes met Draco's for a moment. "Are you happy?"

She nodded. "Yes."

He sighed as his eyes met Draco's again. "If you ever hurt her, I will kill you."

Draco nodded. "Understood, sir."

James grinned and placed a hand on Draco's shoulder. "Told you that you wouldn't have to marry that evil little b-er, witch."

Draco laughed and hugged James. "Thanks, for everything."

Dumbledore just stood back and smiled. It was nice to see everyone so happy. His eyes met Harry's as he held hands with Ginny and he smiled; everything was coming together.

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Ginny was just about ready to head down to the school train when Hermes flew through her dormitory window. She smiled at the bird and wondered what Penny had to say this time. She gave Hermes an owl treat that she habitually carried in her pocket for Hedwig before she unscrolled the letter and began to read:

**Dear Ginny,**

**I was so happy to receive your letter. I admit, I was a bit of a nervous wreck once I sent that off. I'm glad that you want to help get Percy back with his family. I'm also extremely shocked. Percy swore to me that his family knew about us and about our boys. I'm definitely going to be having some words with him about that later.**

**So first of all, let me tell you a bit more about Percy. He's changed. He's still that ambitious boy that you remember but he's changed. He takes charge and is a real leader and I have no doubt that within the future his political goals will bring him to the minister position. He's a wonderful father and knows how to have fun with the kids, which I'll admit surprised me a bit**



considering the way I remember him constantly lecturing Fred and George for their pranks — he has a copy of most of the things they've made as well, not that he'll admit it.

The kids are doing great and are currently sleeping — my peace and quiet time. I did indeed send pictures so I hope you enjoy them.

There's something else — Percy was ... he was under the Imperius Curse last year for quite a long period of time. He doesn't remember everything that he said and did but he does know that he ... he came face to face with You-Know-Who but escaped without being brandished the dark mark. He has nightmares about it and I know he killed someone while under it but he doesn't remember the details. He needs his family.

This is what I was thinking, Ginny. I'll get a portkey to the Burrow and bring him there before he knows what's happening. We'll make him talk to his family. What do you think?

With love,  
Penny

Ginny picked up the pictures that had fallen out of the letter and grinned. The boys were adorable and Percy did look happy with them. She grinned and pulled out a quill and some parchment to write a quick response.

*Penny,*

*Good plan — I'll let you know about the location though as we have been moving around a lot for safety reasons. I need to talk to my mum and dad too — they'll want to see Percy and you and their grandsons. Hope you're well.*

*With love,  
Ginny*

She sent the letter along with Hermes and then she levitated her trunk and Midnight's cage out of the room. It was time to go home.

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Ginny sat curled up in Harry's arms in the train compartment grinning at Draco and Delilah who were cuddled close. Ron held Hermione as well and he grinned down at her. This was the life. Everyone was with who they wanted to be with. Blaise and Daphne were cuddled together as well, sitting next to Neville and Luna. Seamus was sitting on the floor, leaning back against the window of the train with Lavender in his lap. Colin and Demelza were sitting as well, though they still weren't together much to Ginny's dismay.

Ginny glared a bit at her friends and Demelza rolled her eyes at her, leaning back against the seat. "You look so happy, Draco. I'm happy for you."

He grinned and kept his arm draped loosely around Delilah's shoulders. "I am happy. I didn't want to be with Pansy and now I'm free. Nothing could make me happier."

Seamus wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "Well, I don't know about that."

Everyone laughed and Ginny grinned. "We really are all so happy for you, Draco, especially since Delilah here finally gave the bloke a chance."

Delilah laughed and turned to kiss her fiancée softly. "Yeah, he definitely got the biggest chance of them all ... I'm engaged to the bloke, am I not?" When everyone laughed she grinned. "Besides if he pisses me off or makes me sad my father will just kill him."

Draco grinned. "Most likely."

Ginny grinned at them and then she turned her attention back to two of her best friends. "So Colin, what's your excuse?"

"Excuse?" Colin asked; a bewildered look on his face.

Ginny nodded. "Yeah, excuse. You know, the one you're using for not

being with Dee yet?” When he continued to look puzzled she sighed. “We all saw you when we were playing Truth or Dare and when Dee refused to answer and had to start stripping down you looked like your eyes were bugging out of your head.”

Colin blushed. “No, I wasn’t.”

Harry laughed now. “Oh, yes, you were. I think he was drooling.”

Ron snorted. “More like panting.”

Seamus shrugged. “I don’t know, I think it was a bit of both.”

Colin blushed deeper. “Don’t be ridiculous! Dee is like my sister, it would be wrong for me to ... to even think about her like that ... no way! It’s never going to happen! Right, Dee?”

Demelza glared at them before she exploded angrily. “GINNY, WHY DID YOU EVEN BOTHER? I TOLD YOU WHEN I HAD A CRUSH ON HIM THAT HE DOESN’T SEE ME THAT WAY! ALL THOSE DREAMS AND EVERYTHING, IT DOESN’T MATTER! IT’S NEVER GOING TO HAPPEN! HE SEES ME AS A SISTER! FRIENDS ARE ENOUGH FOR ME! AND I DON’T WANT TO LOSE THAT!”

Ginny sighed as Colin gaped at Demelza in shock. “It’s your choice, Dee, but I’m not the only person in this compartment that knows Colin wants you.”

Colin continued to stare at Demelza, his mouth open wide. Finally, he swallowed and spoke up. “You fancy me? I’m this dream guy that I’ve been hearing so much about, yet so little? It’s me who you refused to admit that you fancied in the Truth or Dare game? Well hell, that changes everything!”

Then to Demelza’s surprise, he yanked her forward into his lap and crushed his mouth to hers. The whole compartment cheered. When he pulled away she grinned at him and hugged him tight.

“If this was a fluke, I’ll hex you.” She murmured.

He grinned and tilted his head to hers. "Nah, want to be my girlfriend, Dee?"

She nodded. "Yes."

The room cheered again as Demelza yanked Colin's mouth back to hers.

Ginny turned to Harry and grinned. "See, I'm a genius."

He laughed. "Nah, you just gave them the push." When she slapped his arm playfully he grinned. "And you're a genius. I love you." He brought his lips to hers and she grinned ... it was going to a great summer.

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When they arrived at the train station, Harry was pleased to see that everyone was there to greet them. Sirius and Lexy were there with Keira in Sirius' arms; Remus and Tonks were there with Daniel; James and Lily were holding tightly to Lyra's hands; and Molly was standing next to them all, grinning.

Once everyone had hugged and said a proper hello. James grinned broadly.

"Well, as I'm sure you all know already, the manor seems to be the place for the summer. Everyone is staying there." He smiled warmly at Delilah. "Delilah, we would be honoured if you would like to stay with us for the summer as well. Naturally, your father is welcome too."

Delilah smiled up at him. "Thank you, Mr. Potter."

Jonathon Knight stepped forward and placed a hand on his daughter's shoulder. "I don't even get a hug hello?"

She laughed and launched herself into her father's arms. "Hello!"

Jonathon's eyes trailed over the group and he nodded at James. "I heard what you said and while I appreciate the offer, I think I'll stay in

my own home.”

James nodded. “Sure, but Delilah’s welcome.”

“What do you say you come home with me for a few days, then I’ll let you go the Potters’ house?” Jonathon asked.

Delilah smiled. “That sounds great.”

She turned and kissed Draco softly. “I’ll see you in a few days then. Will you write?”

He grinned. “Of course.”

Lyra tugged on the bottom of Draco’s tee shirt as he watched Delilah walk away. “Uncle Draco, do you love her?”

He grinned down at her and scooped her up into his arms. “A whole bunch. Almost as much as you.”

She giggled and kissed his cheek, hugging him closely.

Harry moved over to place a hand on his mum’s large stomach. “And how’s this girl doing?”

Lily laughed. “She’s doing well.” She reached over to tug him into her arms. “Now where’s my hug?”

He grinned and hugged her close, kissing the top of her head. He had grown a bit more since Easter, he realized as Lily now only went to his shoulders. “Look at you down there.”

Lily grinned up at him. “Yes, you’ve grown.”

James wrapped an arm around him. “Alright, I’m six one and I think your taller now.”

Sirius nodded as he glanced at them. “Me too.”

Ron grinned as he stood next to them. “I’m still taller.”

Sirius glared at him. "Well I'm the tallest at six three and you're just a weed."

Molly laughed. "My brothers were both six five. So far Bill is the only one to get that tall but I think Ron might pass him."

Ron grinned as he slipped an arm around Hermione. "I hope I'm not taller than Bill."

Hermione looked up at him and nodded. "Me too." She stood on her toes and kissed him softly. "Or I'm going to need a chair."

Ginny pouted. "Well, how come I'm only five five then?"

Molly laughed and kissed her daughter's cheek. "No idea, dear."

Harry grinned and draped an arm over his girlfriend's shoulders. "I like your height."

She rolled her eyes at him. "Compliments are not helping you in this one, Harry."

He grinned. "Worth a try." He headed over to Tonks to steal Daniel. "Hey Dan, how's it going?" Daniel made a sound similar to 'bah' and stuck his thumb back into his mouth. "Now he's growing like a weed."

Tonks nodded as she reached over to brush his hair out of his eyes. "Tell me about it."

Daniel snuggled into his shoulder and Remus smiled. "It's almost his bed time."

James grinned. "Well, let's head back to the manor. We've got a whole lot of cars so who wants to go where?"

It took ten minutes for everyone to find cars and get organized and within an hour, thanks to the cars' special features; they pulled through the gates of Potter Manor. Soon they were all seated in the common room, boxes of pizza open everywhere and butterbeer

bottles scattered about.

Conversations around the room all tended to be something different from babies to weddings to horcruxes to jobs and to the summer. But finally, Sirius spoke up.

“Alright, so I’ve got a question ... who here thinks Moony is sexier than me?”

Harry rolled his eyes. “Okay, I think I win on best dare — did I not say he needed to be taken down a notch?”

Ron nodded. “He’s beginning to sound like Lockhart.”

“Hey! That’s just insulting, and what do you mean by dare?” Sirius asked.

Ginny grinned as she licked pizza sauce off her thumb. “We thought it would be fun to play a game of Truth or Dare to take a break from studying. Harry dared Hermione to hit on Remus and to make a point of some kind about how she thought he was sexier than you, just because you’ve been getting a tad might conceited with this sexiest professor thing. Hermione, however, chickened out and had to suffer the consequences.”

“What were the consequences?” Molly asked.

“She had to, er, go two hours the next day without studying,” Harry supplied.

Molly rolled her eyes. “I’m not stupid, Harry.”

Ginny sighed. “She had to take off her shirt. The rules were that if you chickened out or told a lie you had to remove an article of clothing.”

Bill grinned. “That’s my Firefly.”

Ginny laughed. “Speaking of, what about you? Aren’t you and Fleur supposed to be married by now?”

Bill nodded. "Yeah. The wedding was postponed as I said in my last letter."

"To when though?" Ginny asked.

"Next week. There were some problems with getting everyone to France during that time and then Lexy was on bed rest, so Fleur and I decided to wait." Bill explained.

Fleur nodded from her spot next to him. "E iz worth eet."

Bill grinned. "So are you." He leaned over to kiss her softly.

"Okay, I can't believe that whole con about me being sexy was a game," Sirius replied.

James rolled his eyes. "Here we go again! I understand you were looking for fun guys but he was torture! Going on and on through the whole horcrux thing about it."

Frank nodded from where he was sitting with his wife. "Reminded me why he was such a bad ass in school. Girls falling at his feet, stealing cars ..."

"Stealing cars?" Lexy asked, turning to look at her husband.

Sirius sighed. "Longbottom won't forgive me for hot-wiring his car that one day."

"Where did you learn that?" Tonks asked.

Sirius shrugged. "No idea to be honest, but it was fun. I knew he was inside this theatre with Alice so I stole his car and parked it a block away. I even left a note there. He found it obviously and was pissed off. Can't imagine why. Besides, stealing cars is cool — girls loved me."

"Hmm," Lexy murmured. "I just know he's the type Kiera's going to end up dating in school, you watch."



Sirius paled. “Oh no, Keira is not allowed to date, EVER. Or kiss, or hug, or hold hands and definitely no sex — never! Understood?”

Lexy laughed. “You keep thinking that, honey.”

Neville laughed as he looked over at his parents. “What did you do dad when you found out what he did?”

“I hexed the git, naturally, but my mistake was doing it in public — all the girls thought it was the hottest thing, him hotwiring a car. He became a babe magnet. It was disgusting.” Frank explained.

Sirius grinned, tucking his hands behind his head as he leaned back against the couch. “I told you.”

Harry laughed and shook his head. It was really going to be a great summer.

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## **Chapter 86: Summer Love and Summer Troubles**

**Author's Notes:** thanks to all and plz review:D

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## **Chapter Eighty-Six — Summer Love and Summer Troubles**

Delilah sat in the common room of the small cottage that she lived in admiring the beautiful ring on her hand. She still felt like it was all a dream. She was engaged, and to a Malfoy at that. Yet she had wondered about how her father felt about it. He hadn't said much other than to threaten Draco's life if he hurt her. Her father's opinion was the most important in the world and she was afraid that he might be disappointed in her. She smiled up at her father as he came into the room with two cups of tea.

“Daddy, you didn't have to bother. I told you that I would take care of it.” She said, as she watched him settle the tea on the table. It was

always her job to cook and clean when she was home from school. It always had been, ever since she had lost her mum.

Jonathon smiled at her. "I know, sweetheart, but contrary to popular belief, I can take care of myself, you know."

She laughed. "I know, but I can't help it if I remember the time you put too much soap in the washing machine, dish soap at that and it exploded all over the house or the time that you made tea for our guests and forgot the tea bags and added sugar to the water."

Jonathon blushed as he took a seat next to her. "I was experimenting."

"I bet. Where's Marlena today?" She asked, thinking about the housekeeper that she had chosen for her father two years ago to help him out when she was away. She didn't like that he was left alone and well if she was going to be honest with herself, Jonathon Knight was a scholar and one of the most forgetful men alive. It really was for his own good and for her own peace of mind. He wrote books on muggle history as well as magic history and was a well-known author in both worlds. When he got involved in his writing he tended to forget to clean, to eat, to sleep ... and well, everything. Delilah had been taking care of him most of her life and she enjoyed it. She also knew that he needed to be taken care of no matter what he said.

"She's on vacation for two weeks. She went to visit her sister in France. I've been fine, Delilah, really."

She smiled. "I know, I'm just double checking." She took a sip of her tea and leaned over to kiss his cheek. "I worry about you. I know how you are when you get involved in one of your books. How's the latest one coming? It's on the history of the English monarchy isn't it?"

Jonathon nodded, stretching his legs out so that they reached the table. "It is and it's going really well. I'm at Queen Victoria now and her passionate love for Prince Albert."

Delilah grinned. "You're always romanticizing things."

*"Romance has been elegantly defined as the offspring of fiction and love,"* He replied, a grin on his face. "Benjamin Disraeli said that. He was a smart man."

Delilah rolled her eyes. "Do you think romance is that important?"

"I think so. Without romance the love is not as enjoyable. I used to love watching your mother's face light up when I brought her flowers or some small trinket. It didn't matter how insignificant the gift but that it made her smile. It's the thought that counts, right?"

"I guess, yeah."

Jonathon's arm draped around her and he fiddled with the ends of her hair. "Is Malfoy not romantic, honey?"

Delilah grinned. "I think he is. There's so much to him that I don't know and that he's still exploring now that he's out from his father's shadow. You haven't really said much about everything ... I mean, I expected you to be angry with me, after all, Draco is ... well a Malfoy."

"I am angry Delilah. I'm angry that I know what his father did and I can't prove it. I can't make him be punished for it. I'm angry that Narcissa Malfoy is just as much to blame and knows exactly what her husband did, yet does nothing about it. But his son ... he would have been around eight or nine at the time and I can't blame him for something like that. He was a child and a son should not have to pay for his father's sins. I also know you. Honey, you know your mind more than anyone else and if this is what you want ... to marry a Malfoy ... there's nothing that I would do to stop you if he makes you happy."

She nodded. "He's really nice and he's nothing like his father or his mother. I judged him wrong and I feel horribly about it. He ... he saw what happened to mum."

Jonathon's eyes narrowed. "He saw it?"

Delilah nodded. "He didn't understand it, except that it was wrong. He

didn't even remember until I threw it in his face. I think he blocked it from his mind in a way. He says that it was the moment when he stopped viewing his father as a hero the way little boys do. But he can't prove it either, as he says his father manages to get away with everything. He's not like him. He's not that cocky little jerk that he was before. I mean ... he stood up to his father this past summer and down right refused to be a Death Eater and I think that's when he began to open up to himself. He stepped out of his father's shadow and is now with people who understand him, with people who love him and care about him. He's changed and for the better. I like him a lot, Daddy."

"But you don't love him, Del."

She shrugged and moved to cuddle into him, grinning when his arm tightened around her and she could smell cinnamon. She remembered cuddling with him like this as a child as he would tell her one of his stories about some great person in history. "I can see myself falling in love with him. He's wonderful and sweet and handsome and funny. I had to do this. You saw the girl that he was being forced to marry ... it wasn't fair, to either of us."

Jonathon sighed and kissed the top of his daughter's head. "I trust you, Del, and I know you like him and I can tell by the way he looks at you that he's head over heels in love but ... the Malfoy thing is going to get some getting used to. He seems like a pretty likeable guy though. It's mostly who his parents are and knowing what they've done ... it's hard to accept."

Delilah grinned and turned to kiss her father's cheek. "He is. His name is Draco, Daddy, not Malfoy."

He sighed. "Well, he is going to be my son-in-law, alright, Draco."

She grinned. "You should come to the manor and stay, too. I don't want you to be out here on your own."

"I'll be fine."

She shook her head. "No, Daddy, please come. There's so much

going on right now and I want you with me where I can keep my eye on you.”

He sighed. “Just who is the parent here?”

She laughed and hugged him close, knowing that he had given in. “So what would you like me to make for dinner tonight?”

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Later on that evening, once the manor had settled down for the night, Ginny was in what she had come to view as her room, getting ready for bed. She changed into an old Pride of Portree jersey that she had stolen from Harry just as a knock sounded on her bedroom door. She finished wiggling into it before she called out for the person to come in. She smiled at her mother when she stepped inside.

“Hi, Mum.”

Molly smiled at her daughter and closed the door behind her. “Hi sweetheart, were you going to bed?”

Ginny shook her head. “No, not quite yet, I was going to read for a bit. Harry bought me a new book, one of those trashy romance ones I love.”

Molly laughed. “I know, you enjoy the same ones as me. Well, it’s good that you’re not going to bed just yet, I want to talk to you a minute.”

Ginny nodded and crawled onto her bed, leaning back against the headboard. “Sure, what’s going on?”

Molly wrung her hands together for a moment before she took a seat across from her daughter. “We haven’t really spoken in a while. I mean, not woman to woman.”

She nodded, wondering where this was going. Molly’s talks tended to be a bit embarrassing at times. “Not since Christmas and even then it was more of a yelling match over the bellybutton ring.”

She smiled. "Yes. You're growing up so fast, Ginevra. Emma explained to me about your physical growth when I asked her more about it. You really did blossom and I'll say this you are a lot better built than I was at your age."

Ginny blushed. "Mum!"

Molly laughed, reaching out to brush a curl away from her daughter's cheek. "Well, it's true. I know that I'm not the only one who has noticed either. The way that Harry looks at you ... it's a wonder he's not burning alive. When you two were talking earlier about that Truth or Dare game ... I didn't yell, but I wanted to ... stripping as a consequence of the actions for a game ... and with such a large group of people is, well, it's not right. It is inappropriate for a girl your age actually, for anyone, but I know that you're a young woman now. A beautiful and talented young woman and I have to realize that you're growing up and that you make your own choices. You may not tell me everything anymore, Ginny, but you're still my baby and I want you to know that I'm always here when you need someone to talk to, about anything."

She nodded and leaned over to kiss Molly's cheek. "I know that, Mum. I haven't been keeping anything from you, well not really. I did keep the bellybutton ring from you and well ... promise you won't flip out?"

Her eyes narrowed slightly and then she sighed. "As long as you're not pregnant."

Ginny laughed. "No!" She slipped the jersey up to show the dragon. "I have a tattoo."

Molly's eyes widened as she stared down at her daughter's thigh. She looked like she wanted to yell but then her eyes softened and she sighed. "A tattoo?"

"Yes. It was Emma's idea and at first I thought that it was completely crazy but then I couldn't help but think about how Harry would react when he saw it so I got it."

Molly sighed. "I want to say that it's completely inappropriate for a young lady your age and that Harry should most definitely not be seeing that as it's on quite an intimate part of your body, but I suppose I would be a hypocrite."

"What do you mean?" Ginny asked.

Molly sighed and stood up to untie her trousers, pushing them down just enough before she turned to show her daughter. Low on her left hip was a small pink rosebud. "I got it when I was fifteen. Mostly just to do something rebellious I suppose."

Ginny's mouth dropped open in shock. "You have a tattoo?"

Molly nodded. "Yes and I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't mention this to any of your brothers. It's just between us girls." She fixed her trousers before she sat back down. "As I said it was a rebellious moment, my friend Tiffany and I both snuck out into Hogsmeade and got them one day. I was the same age as you. I won't complain about it. But can I ask why you got a dragon?"

"Emma suggested it," Ginny answered. "She said that it means wisdom and power and can be seen as a sign of good luck. It also has that protector of the innocence idea like the story about the princess in the tower guarded by the fire-breathing dragon? Well, I decided on the horntail as a symbol for Harry too since that's what he fought and won in the tournament. I like it."

"It is ... interesting. Well, I ... thanks for telling me."

Ginny grinned. "I can't believe you have a tattoo."

Molly blushed. "Yes well, I was young." She sighed, her face still a bit pink. "Speaking of being young, I don't want you to make the same choices I did. You know that I was pregnant with Bill when I left school. I was four months along when your father and I got married. Times were similar to now, troublesome and times of war... but I don't want you to rush into things."

Ginny rolled her eyes. "Mum, I'm almost sixteen I can make my own

choices and no, Harry and I have not had sex, yet.”

She let out a sigh of relief. “I’m glad to hear that.”

“But we will, soon.” Ginny replied ignoring her mother’s glare. “I love him, Mum, and we’ve been dating for almost two years. I know that I’ve been driving him crazy and he definitely has been driving me crazy. He pushes because he can’t stand the frustration but he never pressures me.”

“He better not be trying to rush you into anything, Ginevra.”

“He’s not, Mum. He’s being a complete gentleman but I don’t want to wait too much longer. I’ve waited a long time already.”

Molly closed her eyes for a moment before she took her daughter’s hand in hers. “Are you sure that you’re ready for something like this, Ginevra? Sex is a big thing and ... I just want you to be careful.” She placed her hand on Ginny’s cheek and smiled. “I know that all of my boys have had sex and I know that it’s harder to control them in that sense but a girl’s first time is special. It should be special and it should never happen until she’s perfectly ready.”

Ginny nodded. “I know, Mum, and I’m ready. More than ready, actually. Sometimes I can’t even breathe because I want him so badly; I want him to take that next step. But therein lies the problem ... he’s too much of a gentleman.”

Molly laughed and pulled her daughter close. “Now that I can relate to. I was hopelessly in love with your father, you know. He was dating this horrible girl named Mindy, and he never gave me the time of day. Well, I worked for his attention and when he finally noticed me, well, I’m proud to say he couldn’t keep his eyes off of me. We dated for a year and by seventh year I found myself in your situation. I’ve never been with anyone but your father. Arthur was ... a perfect gentleman. It drove me crazy because I didn’t know how to tell him what I wanted.”

“So what did you do?” Ginny asked, curious to hear more about her parents’ relationships as teens.



Molly smiled. "Tiffany and I set up a private room in one of the old guest rooms in the castle. We placed privacy wards around it and I lured him there and I ... well, I seduced him. He never knew what hit him."

Ginny laughed, imagining her father flushing red and his ears burning. "Poor Daddy ... good plan though."

Molly smiled. "Honey, as a mother, I'm naturally going to worry but I also know that they now have potions for you to take so that you don't fall into the same problem I did. I love Arthur with all my heart; I love him more now than I did when we were seventeen and I don't regret marrying him and having Bill so young, not for one moment. But I want you to experience married life before you have children. If you think that you're ready to take that step with Harry, then be careful and be prepared." She grinned mischievously now. "And if you want him to know that you're ready for the next step I think that you should seduce him. But, make sure that you dress the part first."

Ginny's eyes widened at her mother. "What?"

Molly shrugged. "You are old enough to make your own choices, Ginny. If this is what you want, I'm not going to stop you. I know that times are dark now and that they will only get worse. I know what Harry has to do in the near future. He has to fight You-Know-Who and I know you well enough that seducing him has crossed your mind. That whole line about going off to war and might not come back. You two have been together for almost two years and I trust your judgment. If you want him, then seduce him. I'm sure Emma helped you pick out some sexy lingerie in New York, Ginny. If you're going to seduce Harry, well, I suggest you make it good."

"You're okay with it."

Molly leaned over and pulled her daughter into her arms. "You're one year away from being an adult. I know that you're capable of making your own decisions. If this is what you want, and if you're really ready, then yes, I'm okay with it."

She smiled up at her mum. "Thanks, that means a lot."

Molly grinned. "My pleasure. Now here's a question for you — what do you think of Emma and Charlie?"

"What about them?" Ginny asked, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. She was still completely surprised in everything that she and her mother had just talked about.

She sighed. "Emma is ... well she's not exactly the woman that I would have picked out for him. She's a bit er ... wild."

Ginny laughed. "And absolutely perfect for him. Charlie's a bit wild himself, Mum."

"I know but don't you think he needs someone to tame him? Okay, tame isn't the right word, but, you know ... to keep him in line?" Molly asked.

"Mum, trust me on this. I was so happy when I walked in on them snogging. Emma is wonderful. She's beautiful and powerful and smart and she's good for him because she didn't just fall at his feet. Charlie and Bill are alike so much in that sense. They are like babe magnets and Bill lucked out with Fleur because she understood his problem. Fleur is part Veela and men are always falling at her feet. Bill and Fleur found each other. Charlie has that same attitude. Women flock to him because he's gorgeous and he's wild; he's a dragon tamer and they think that's dangerous ... but they don't know him. There's more to Emma than meets the eye, trust me, they're good for each other. They just don't quite know it yet."

Molly sighed. "I guess I'll have to take your word on that. You've always known William and Charles better than any of us. The relationship that you have with them is like the one I used to have with Gideon and Fabian. And it's not just Emma ... I'm not too crazy about Fleur, either."

Ginny laughed. "Why not? I mean, I wasn't exactly fond of her but it wasn't her ... I was scared of losing Bill. Bill and I had a long talk though, and I realized I was being stupid about it."

Molly smiled and kissed her cheek. "I'm glad and you're not going to lose Bill. You're his best friend."

She smiled. "That sounds nice, his best friend. But, why don't you like Fleur?"

She sighed and stared down at her nails for a moment. "It's not that I don't like her. She's a beautiful and powerful young woman she's just a bit of a ... well, a snob."

Ginny laughed. "Mum, she's just used to a different lifestyle. The Delacours are a very rich and distinguished family in France. Besides, she loves Bill."

"I know and that's all that matters, besides, she's beginning to grow on me."

Ginny smiled. "Good. What about Angie, Mum? She and Fred are great together."

Molly smiled now. "I like Angelina. She has Fred wrapped around her finger. She lets him have his fun and his pranks and act as stupid as he pleases but at the same time she reins him in when it's appropriate. She knows when to calm him down. I've always liked her. She's beautiful and talented and Fred adores her. I met Katie, finally, as well."

"Good. I'm glad that George and Katie got their act together. Fred sent me a brief note telling me but he wasn't big on the details."

"Well, apparently Katie conned him into it. She was never actually engaged to anyone else. It was all a ploy just to scare him enough into realizing what he wanted."

Ginny grinned. "Well, Katie is a smart one. She's two years younger than him so I can see why he wanted to wait but she's done school now. How long do you think it will take them to get engaged?"

Molly sighed. "All of my babies are getting married, aren't they?"

Ginny winced as she thought about Percy, but this wasn't the time to bring it up. "Yeah, I guess so. Charlie and Emma aren't getting married yet, though. They think it's just sex."

"Hmm, well if you say that they're good together, then I believe you."

"Good. Don't worry, Mum, it will all work out for the best. Besides, we've got other things to worry about ... like family."

"What do you mean by that, Ginevra?" Molly asked.

Ginny shook her head. "I can't tell you just yet. But trust me; it will be quite a surprise."

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Remus stood in the doorway just watching them. His home, his family ... it was all so amazing. He had never pictured himself ever experiencing such a happy thing. He was a werewolf and he had always learned that he didn't deserve this, or he had convinced himself of such a feat. But now as he leaned against the doorframe just watching his wife change their son's diaper he knew that he was home.

He had never really pictured Tonks as the maternal type. She was spunky and gorgeous and so damn clumsy. He was never going to forget the time when they were making love on their honeymoon in the bathroom and she ripped the towel bar out of the wall, tumbling them both into the bathtub. He loved everything about her though.

Now, as she held Daniel in her arms, he knew that he had never been happier. It was her that he had been waiting for. He stepped up behind her and slipped his arms around her waist, leaning in to nuzzle her neck.

She smiled and leaned back against him. "There's Daddy."

"Da-da!" Daniel exclaimed, his arms reaching out for his father.

Remus pulled his son into his arms and kissed the top of his head. He couldn't explain the feeling of joy that came into his heart when he heard his son call out to him. He kissed Daniel again before he pulled his wife close and kissed her deeply. "I love you."

Tonks grinned, her eyes twinkling up at him in happiness. "I know that, silly."

He smiled. "Sometimes I just don't think I say it enough."

She smiled and kissed him softly. "I love you too."

*Yeah*, Remus thought. This was what he had been waiting for.

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James watched as Lily followed Lyra as she ran over to her bed. He still had trouble believing that this was his life. For so long it had only been he and Harry. Now, he not only had his wife but also had been lucky enough to get a beautiful baby girl with another one on the way. Lily was hugely pregnant now at seven months. He knew that she was going to be giving him another daughter. In a way, they already had three children, soon to be four, even if Draco didn't realize that. James had never thought that he would come to love a Malfoy as his own son. Harry was a miracle on his own, but now he had Lyra too, and soon he would have another daughter.

Lyra was so special, and she had bonded almost instantly with them. She was still a bit shy around Molly and Arthur, as well as most of the Weasleys, but she stuck to Ginny from time to time, probably because she was always with Harry. She'd cuddle into them at night sometimes when she had a bad dream and she loved to hear stories before she went to bed. The werewolf thing didn't affect her but she also didn't really understand it. Lily gave her the potion half an hour before the full moon. James would then take her outside and they would talk and play until her transformations hit. He would transform into his panther shape to be with her during her hard time. It helped her stay calm and he knew that it was good for her. He enjoyed it as well. It was also interesting as Remus joined them.

James had been hesitant at first about having Remus with her, but his instincts took over. She was a werewolf cub and Remus protected her well. They had fun running around the grounds of Glasgow Hall and when Lyra woke up in the morning she didn't always remember everything. James knew that that would change as she got older and that her memory of being a werewolf would increase. It hurt him to watch her change. But he knew that until they found a cure for her condition he wouldn't be able to stop it. He would just have to make it as comfortable as possible for her.

Lily smiled up at him from where she sat reading Lyra the bedtime story. He sat down next to them and listened to Lily's soft voice as she told them the tale of a beautiful young girl who was forced to live with an evil stepmother and two stepsisters and do all of their bidding. When the story finished, Lyra was snuggled back against James, sleeping soundly.

Lily leaned down to kiss her forehead. "She's so precious."

James grinned. "That's because she's ours."

"She really is, isn't she?" Lily replied, stroking a hand over her daughter's hair.

James nodded and moved to tuck his daughter in. "It's more than I ever could have hoped for, my Lily Rose."

Lily smiled and stood on her toes to kiss her husband softly. "Me too."

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Ginny grinned to herself when she stepped in the common room and noticed her brother pinning Emma back against the wall, his hands roaming. She knew her brother better than anyone, he never stayed with anyone as long as he had been with Emma. It was obviously so much more than sex. She cleared her throat and they broke apart.

Charlie blinked at her. "Always interrupting, Shortstop."

Ginny grinned. "Well, don't snog in such public places."

Charlie stuck his tongue out at her before he winked at Emma and left the room.

Emma ran her fingers through her hair and grinned foolishly after him. "Well, he is something."

"I don't know why you're not conning him into marriage. The two of you are so perfect for each other."

Emma grinned. "I'd rather wait for him to come to that conclusion for himself. Do you think I don't know that this is the longest relationship he's ever been in? It may have started out only about sex but he brings me flowers or little trinkets. I'm so in love with him."

Ginny squealed and launched herself into Emma's arms. "Really? I was hoping you were but I wasn't too sure, to be honest."

"No, I am and I think he loves me too, he just hasn't realized it yet. I'd like to marry him though. Scary thought, me getting married, but I would."

"You two are perfect for each other. I knew it from the day I saw Charlie glance at you in appreciation."

Emma laughed. "Well, I hope so. We'll just have to see what happens. How are you doing? Your powers are still growing?"

She nodded. "Every day I get stronger. I still try to run in the morning and Harry comes with me. Its fun and we have a good time. But I'm anxious to really see what I'm capable of doing. The short duel we had in the Three Broomsticks doesn't count, to me. I want to show people what I can do."

Emma nodded. "I get that, and when the time comes, you'll be able to show people exactly what you can do. The time will come. Until then, you just have to keep working with your strengths and abilities, until you think there's nothing more you can do."

"I know and that's my plan. Besides, I've got other things I'd like to be

worrying about at the moment.”

“Such as?” Emma asked, a knowing smile on her face.

Ginny shrugged. “Hormones.”

Emma laughed. “Well that’s definitely a thing worth getting to work out. But remember what we talked about and be careful.”

“Don’t worry, I already spoke to mum too, who by the way, is very much for you and Charlie.”

Emma smiled. “Oh, your mum really didn’t like me at first and I know it. But I think I’m growing on her. Now, I don’t mean to cut this conversation short, Ginevra but all this talk about hormones and such has got me a bit ... well, I know for a fact that Charlie is in the shower and I think I’d like to join him.” She winked at her before she hurried out of the room.

Ginny laughed as she watched her go. She had been right, Emma and Charlie were perfect for each other.

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The summer was flying by quickly. Harry wasn’t sure if he was pleased or angry to know that no news had been heard about Voldemort and what he was doing. It made him more nervous when he heard nothing than he was when he heard about horrible murders happening, Harry didn’t know exactly what that said about him as a person, but it was true. But now it was the day of his seventeenth birthday, he was finally becoming an adult. He wasn’t sure how he felt about it, but he did know that Ginny was driving him crazy.

All summer she had been teasing and tormenting him with long deep kisses and stroking her hands over him until he was ready to explode. She was trying to kill him, she had to be. Just thinking about what she could do to him made him hard and he closed his eyes to try to think of anything else. He really wasn’t sure how much longer he could last without just grabbing her and ... no he had to be calm.



He crawled out of bed, feeling more than a little uncomfortable and then he headed into the bathroom. Thirty minutes later, after an extremely cold shower he felt better and he headed downstairs just as the doorbell rang. He glanced over in surprise and headed to the door, pulling it open. Delilah and her father were standing there.

“Well, hello!”

Delilah smiled. “Hi, Harry. Sorry it took me so long to come over, but I wanted to spend some time with my father.”

Harry nodded. “Oh yeah, that’s fine really, come on in.” He grinned at Jonathon Knight. “Have you decided to stay as well, Mr. Knight?”

Jonathon nodded. “My daughter has convinced me to. She seems to be worried something will happen.”

James came out of the study with Lyra riding piggyback. “Good morning.” He pulled Harry close for a hug and kissed the top of his head making Harry’s cheeks flush in embarrassment. “Happy birthday.”

“Da,” Harry murmured, his eyes darting over towards their new guests.

Delilah laughed. “Happy birthday, Harry. Are you seventeen then?”

He nodded. “Yeah. Da, Delilah and Mr. Knight are both here to stay.”

James grinned. “Excellent. I’m glad to see that you changed your mind, Jonathon, too much has been going on out there.”

Maddy and Mickey came into the room smiling and took their luggage out, wishing Harry a quick happy birthday before they headed up the stairs. James passed Lyra to Harry before he began to talk to Jonathon about work and about some of the things that had been going on. The two of them continued straight to the study, where Harry had a feeling that James was going to explain the reasons why the manor was safer than their home.

Harry shifted Lyra onto his back and grinned at Delilah. "Have you met my sister yet? Delilah, this is Lyra, Lyra, this is a friend of mine from school, Delilah."

Lyra smiled sheepishly but her face stayed close to Harry's from where she was cuddled on his back. "Nice to meet you."

Delilah smiled, reaching out to squeeze her hand. "It's nice to meet you too, honey."

"Are you in love with Uncle Draco? He says that you're going to get married." Lyra replied, tilting her head as she glanced at her.

Delilah laughed. "Well, he's right."

"So if you get married does that mean that I get to call you Aunt Delilah?"

Harry grinned when Delilah blushed. "Princess, that's exactly right. Uncle Draco and Aunt Delilah, right Knight?"

Delilah blushed. "Right."

Harry laughed. "Come on, let's go get some breakfast I'm starving."

Lily stood up when they entered the dining room and took Lyra out of his arms before she pulled him close for a hug and kissed both of his cheeks. "Happy birthday, sweetheart."

He grinned. "Thanks Mum. Delilah and her dad arrived for the rest of the summer."

Ginny smiled broadly, and after saying hello to Delilah, jumped up to hug Harry. His entire body reacted as soon as she touched him and he knew that he was going to explode soon if she didn't stop tormenting him. She turned her head and stood on her toes to kiss him softly. "Happy birthday."

"Thanks." He kissed her again and then carefully moved away from her to prevent himself from throwing her down to the floor and diving

in. He took a seat at the table and listened to the chatter around him. It seemed like the manor was always full of people now.

Lily and Lyra were at the table next to Sirius who was holding Keira; Lexy sat next to him. Remus, Tonks, and Daniel were there for his birthday, but they were living in their own home, as it was nearby. Bill, Fleur, Molly, Arthur, Charlie, Emma, Ron, and Hermione were staying at the manor as well. Fred and George were still living in Diagon Alley; though Harry was pretty sure that Fred and Angelina were looking for a house to live in for once they got married. Frank and Alice were visiting with Neville and Luna, who was staying with Neville for a few weeks, but they lived in their own home just outside of London as well. It was still very busy.

“What would you like for breakfast, sweetie?” Lily asked as she carefully watched Lyra butter her toast.

Sirius grinned. “He’s a man today; he wants a bottle of Firewhiskey.”

“That’s for later, Padfoot, must I remind you?” James asked as he stepped into the room.

Lily pursed her lips at them. “Hmm.”

Remus grinned. “Don’t hmm at us, Lily, you knew that was coming. Did you really expect the Marauders to have Harry turn seventeen and not give him a nice bottle of Firewhiskey?”

Lily rolled her eyes. “No, I knew it was coming I had just hoped it wouldn’t have. Honestly, sometimes I think you three will never grow up.”

“Remember your seventeenth, Prongs?” Sirius asked. “You got so piss-faced drunk that you fell down the stairs of the dormitory and landed on top of Remus, who was following you from behind?”

Remus groaned. “Yeah because you were too drunk to hold onto him so he fell.”

James laughed. “Some fun times.”

Harry laughed. "Yeah, they sound real exciting."

Everyone laughed and James stuck his tongue out at Harry.

Draco stepped into the kitchen yawning then and his eyes stopped on Delilah and he grinned. "Hey."

Delilah smiled back. "Hey."

He stepped over to her and kissed her softly. "I didn't know you were coming today."

She shrugged. "I figured I would surprise you. My father has decided to stay as well."

Draco nodded and smiled at Jonathon. "Good." He took Delilah's hand in hers and led her to the table, taking a seat before he grinned at Harry. "Happy Birthday."

"Thanks." Harry replied as he filled his plate with scrambled eggs. He gave Ginny an amused look when she stole a piece of bacon from his plate. "So, anything going on today?"

"Are you subtly asking if you're getting presents or a party?" James asked, grinning.

Harry shrugged. "Maybe."

Lily smiled. "Of course you are, just later on."

Maddy hurried into the room then. "James! Dumbledore has just sent a floo message, he's arriving any minute."

James nodded. "Alright, thanks Maddy." He turned back to the room. "I've got a feeling it isn't good news."

Molly nodded, her hand tightening around Arthur's. "I wish the boys would come stay here with us."

Arthur smiled at his wife. "Me too, honey, but they're safe where they are."

A few moments later Dumbledore stepped into the room. "Good morning, everyone and happy birthday to you, Harry."

"Thank you, sir."

Dumbledore sighed. "You are all looking at me as if you know something is wrong and you would be right. Ellie Douglas is missing."

Alice gasped and grabbed Frank's hand. "Missing? Ellie? What happened?"

"I don't know. She was doing a follow-up on one of the muggle murders in East London and she never came back to check in last night. No one's seen her since she left." He explained.

"Was it like it was with Aberforth?" James asked, his hand tightening in Lily's shoulder.

Dumbledore shook his head. "I'm not sure. There doesn't appear to be a struggle anywhere but we all know Ellie and she would not just leave like this. Something happened and naturally it is best to assume the worst. I've started a small search party for her in the area where she was last seen. Alice, I know you were close with her and I was hoping that you might be able to help us locate her."

Alice nodded. "Of course, Albus, she is one of my best friends, I'll do anything to find her again."

"Good. I apologize for this news to be passed on your seventeenth birthday, Harry."

Harry shook his head. "No, it's fine, just find her. Who is she anyway?"

"Another member of the Order. You've never met her, Harry," Lily explained.

Harry watched as the adults all stood up and began to scatter, except for Lily who stayed, as she was almost eight months pregnant. James kissed her softly before they all left the room. Harry could only sigh.

Lily reached out and took his hand in hers. "I know you want to go with them but we need you here. This is not something that you should be doing on your seventeenth birthday. They'll find Ellie, I know they will, I just hope that they won't be too late."

Harry nodded and kissed his mum's cheek. "I know, me too."

Ginny leaned back against Harry, her hand clutching his. "Just when we thought he was getting quiet. I don't know what's worse, when he's quiet or when he's causing problems."

Harry nodded. "Yeah, me either."

But as he held Ginny close, he couldn't help but wonder just what he was going to do. He was seventeen now and he had no intention of being told to stay behind any longer. He just had to get his point across that he was no longer going to stay behind. He was going to help and he was going to fight. He just wanted to see someone try to stop him.

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Draco sat in the backyard with Delilah in his lap. It was later on that afternoon, and no news had come through on whether Ellie Douglas had been found or not. Draco kept his arms around Delilah, wondering if it was wrong for him to feel so happy during such a terrible time.

"What are you thinking about?" Delilah asked, turning so that she could look at him.

Draco shrugged and reached up to scratch his chin. "I don't know to be honest. I'm just thinking about life I guess and if it's right to be feeling so happy during such terrible times."

Delilah smiled and turned so that she was straddling him. "Life? Like

our life?”

He grinned. “Maybe. I’ve been wondering ... what was it that made you change your mind about me?”

She sighed. “Dumbledore and a little help from Lady Gwendolynn Potter.”

Draco gave her a puzzled look. “What happened?”

She shrugged. “I looked into the Prospective Glass and I saw what would happen if I married you and what would happen if you married Pansy. It’s not the future but it was an option.”

“What happened?”

“Well, in the first few, we were happy and we were married and playful and we had five children; four boys and a girl. It was wonderful. The one where you married Pansy ... well, I was in love with you but I was your mistress, it wasn’t exactly the ideal life. I realized that I wanted you and I knew that I could fall in love with you, I think I’m already half-way there ... I didn’t want to risk losing you. So I took the leap.”

He grinned and pulled her close to kiss her softly. “I’m glad you did.”

Delilah smiled and pressed her lips to his again, her hands staying on his shoulders as their lips met. The kiss was sweet and long and filled with surrender on both sides. She pulled back and looked into his eyes. “I want to be Mrs. Delilah Malfoy, don’t ever doubt that.”

Draco grinned and pulled her closer. “I won’t, now kiss me again.”

She laughed and kissed the corner of his mouth. “Make me.” Her lips were roaming over his face and down his throat, avoiding his lips at all costs. When she started to nibble at his ear he made a growling sound in his throat and yanked her closer to kiss her. She moaned against his mouth and held on tightly.

“Well, aren’t they adorable, Harry?” Ginny said, causing them to

break apart.

Harry laughed. "Very much so." He plopped down on the grass next to Draco as Ginny cuddled into his lap. "How's life?"

"I think you were interrupting, Potter." Draco replied dangerously.

Delilah laughed and turned around so that she was leaning back against him. "It's alright; I'll remember where we left off."

Harry laughed. "So how does it feel to be engaged to someone you love, for once?"

Draco grinned. "What do you think? It feels great."

"Hmm, well it better," Delilah murmured, making him grin and kiss her again.

"There you four are!" Ron exclaimed as he and Hermione made their way towards them, causing Draco and Delilah to break apart again. "We've been looking for you."

"And snogging along the way," Ginny supplied causing everyone to laugh.

Ron shrugged. "Well, we got bored."

Hermione elbowed him in the ribs. "Prat."

Harry grinned and leaned down to nuzzle Ginny's neck. "Why aren't we in a closet again?"

She blushed deeply and turned to grin at him. "Because that's for later." She was just about to kiss him when her eyes widened. "Hermes," she murmured.

Harry turned and watched as Percy's owl landed at Ginny's feet. He could tell by the look on Ginny's face that she hadn't been expecting a response so soon.



Ron paled instantly as he stared down at the owl. "What the hell is Hermes doing here?"

Ginny didn't answer but instead pulled an owl treat from her pocket and took the letter. She unrolled it and cuddled against Harry, so that only the two of them could read it:

**Ginny,**

**I've spoken to Percy about the situation and I demanded of him why he lied to me. He broke down into tears. I have never in my life seen him cry. He's absolutely terrified to go home. But he says if he has a sign of some sort, that he will be welcome, he'll consider it. I understand why he's so scared, as he didn't exactly leave on good terms and it was his fault. I want to do the portkey thing as soon as possible. Percy has the day off tomorrow. I thought if we did it early in the morning, he would have the entire day to explain himself. I know that it's going to be rough and I know that it's going to be intense. But please ... it's now or never.**

**The five of us will be at the Burrow at nine a.m. tomorrow morning. I hope that there will be more than just you to greet us.**

**With love,  
Penny**

"What does it say, Gin?" Ron demanded. "Why the hell is Percy writing to you?"

Harry sighed. "Percy isn't writing to her, Ron."

"His wife is."

"WHAT?" Ron exclaimed.

Ginny nodded. "I got a letter about two months ago from Penelope Clearwater, that girl he was dating back at Hogwarts. She and Percy got married and she wants to help bring the family back together. I don't even know how to tell Mum and Dad. I think it might be easier to

just get them to the Burrow tomorrow.”

Harry nodded. “Just tell them that you got a letter saying Percy wants to talk. I wouldn’t say much else. It’s his story to tell.”

“ARE YOU TWO BLOODY INSANE? PERCY BETRAYED US! HE HURT MUM AND DAD AND NOW YOU’RE BOTH TALKING ABOUT TAKING THE GIT BACK!”

“Percy?” Molly whispered, a hand going to her throat. She had appeared behind Ron, a tray of snacks in her hands.

Ginny stood up and grabbed her mother’s arm, taking the tray from her before she dropped it. “Mum, what are you doing out here?”

“Ginevra, what about Percy?”

Ginny sighed. “I heard from him. He wants to make amends.”

Molly burst into tears instantly and grabbed her daughter, holding her tight. “He’s alright?”

“Yes, Mum, he’s fine and he’s happy. Tomorrow morning, nine a.m. at the Burrow, he’ll be there.”

Molly wiped tears from her eyes and nodded. “I’ve got to find Arthur.” She hurried back towards the house and Ginny turned towards Ron.

“Thanks for yelling that out to the world.”

Ron shrugged. “I can’t believe that you’re just going to accept him back! The git obviously doesn’t need us!”

Ginny shook her head. “Yes, Ron, he does.”

Harry stood up and took her hand in his. “Come on; let’s go try to calm your parents down.”

She nodded. “Sounds like a good bet.”

Ron watched them head off and he wondered just what else they knew about Percy and weren't saying.

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The next morning, Ginny sat at the kitchen table with her family, all of them anxiously awaiting the clock. It had crossed her mind a few times that this could be a trap but James and Sirius had come and added extra precautions and wards to the Burrow the night before. It was not that they didn't trust Percy, it was that they didn't trust Voldemort.

She tapped her fingers on the table just as a popping noise came from the living room. "Mum, let me handle this. Give me a few moments alone with them — him; I'll bring him in the kitchen." Ginny exclaimed, standing up and heading into the room.

Penny smiled at her when she came into the room. "Hello, Ginny."

Ginny smiled back. Penny was much prettier than she remembered. Her dark brown wavy hair was tied back in a braid and her bright blue eyes twinkled back at her. "Hi." Her eyes fell to the boys next. They really were quite identical. Both Preston and Paul had bright red hair and one of them wore glasses, hiding his bright blue eyes. They even had freckles across their noses. "Hi Preston, hi Paul, I'm your Aunt Ginny."

One of the boys shifted his feet from side to side. "We've never had an aunt before."

She grinned. "Well, now you're going to have quite a few. So which one of you is Preston?"

One of the boys grinned sheepishly. "Mum says I wear glasses so now they know I'm not Paul."

Ginny laughed and bent down to kiss each of their cheeks. "Well, you two are very handsome." Her eyes fell to her brother next. He looked older, but still so young. He held the baby boy in his arms and he stood stiffly. "May I hold my nephew, Perce?"

He nodded and handed Scott to her. Scott had inherited Penny's hair and eyes but he definitely had Percy's nose. She kissed his cheeks.

"Hi Scott." He stuck his thumb in his mouth and blinked at her. She turned back to her brother and smiled. "They're beautiful."

Percy's mouth twitched a bit. "Thank you."

"Don't I even get a hug?"

Percy's eyes softened now and he reached out to pull her into his arms. Ginny wrapped her arms around him, Scott cuddling in between and she kissed his cheek. "I'm sorry, Ginny, I'm so sorry."

Ginny smiled and kissed his cheek again. "You're a real git, you know that?"

He chuckled when he pulled away. "I know."

Ginny reached over to hug Penny next. "Thanks for bringing him back to us."

Penny smiled. "My pleasure."

She nodded. "Alright, Mum and Dad know nothing of this. Ron knows that you're married but ... this isn't something I should tell them."

"I know that, Gin, I didn't expect you too."

"Good. So come on, let's go see the family." When Percy grasped Penny's hand in his she smiled. "I'll go first with Scott."

Ginny cuddled Scott to her and kissed his cheek and then she stepped into the kitchen. "They're here, Mum."

Molly gasped and stood up. "Ginevra!"

Percy stepped up behind her, Preston in his arms and Paul in Penny's arms. "Hello Mum, Dad."

The room was dead silent for a moment and then it was like a bomb went off.

“PERCIVAL IGNATIUS WEASLEY, YOU HAVE A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO!” Molly exclaimed

Preston winced and wrinkled his nose. “Daddy, I thought only Mummy yelled like that.”

Percy laughed and soon the entire room was laughing too. Bill stood up and pulled him into his arms. “You stupid arse, what the hell took you so long?”

Charlie grinned. “You know, we’re going to have to throw you in the lake or something, as a welcome back present.”

Fred and George grinned identical grins as they stood in front of him. “We’ve got plans for you.” Fred replied.

“Excellent testing plans,” George continued.

Ron shrugged. “You made Mum cry.”

Arthur reached out to take Scott from Ginny’s arms. “Who’s this little guy?”

Ginny smiled as Scott cuddled in his shoulder. “This is Scott Ronald Weasley, he’s five months old.”

“Ronald?” Ron repeated in surprise.

“He’s teething a bit at the moment.” Penny supplied. “Percy chose the middle name.”

Ron stared at his brother for a minute as he pondered this but he didn’t say a word.

Molly nodded and bent down to swoop the twins into her arms for a big bear hug. “And who are you two handsome boys?”

"I'm Preston Arthur Weasley and he's Paul Percival Weasley, why did you yell at my Daddy?" Preston asked.

Paul nodded. "Mummy yells really loud, but you sounded louder."

Molly laughed and kissed both of their cheeks. "I'm your grandmum, your daddy is my little boy."

Preston grinned. "Grandmum, do you have any butterbeer?"

"Preston," Penny said sternly. "You know you're not allowed to drink butterbeer."

Molly smiled and then her eyes fell to Penny. "How long have you been married?"

"Percy and I eloped two months after he became estranged from all of you. We went to Martinique. I wanted you to be there but he refused. He was still a bit raw." Penny exclaimed, giving her husband a stern look.

"Don't speak for me, Penny; Mum knows it was my choice." Percy replied.

Arthur nodded. "I'd say we have quite a bit more to discuss than we planned on. Not only did you get married but you made us grandparents and never had the decency to tell us."

Percy shrugged. "I didn't think you would want to hear from me and then the longer I stayed away the harder it became to try to make amends. Penny wrote to Ginny without telling me and they've been plotting this for a while from what I understand."

"Two months actually," Ginny replied. "We were worried about you, Percy. Merlin knows, I missed you. No matter how much of a git you were, you are my brother first and foremost."

Percy nodded. "Yeah, alright so let's talk."

Within fifteen minutes, Molly had the twins settled at the table with fruit and crackers and cheese as everyone moved around to take a seat. Scott was passed around the room and he cuddled happily obviously content for the moment with all of the new faces. The questions started off basic, what had he been doing with his life? Where were they living? But then they turned more serious. Percy explained that he was working as Junior Executive in the minister's office, and Penny was on maternity leave from her position as a general healer at a small clinic just outside of London. But then Ginny spoke up, something she had been dying to know.

"Percy, Penny mentioned something to me about you being under the Imperius."

Percy froze and put his tea down. "I wish she wouldn't have. It's something I don't care to remember."

"He has nightmares about it," Penny replied. "He won't listen to me that he needs to talk about it. I think telling those he loves most would help him."

Molly reached out to take his hand. "Your wife is right dear, it will be better."

Percy sighed and pushed his glasses up his nose. "It was a little over a year ago. Lucius Malfoy had cast it on me. He was using me as his go-getter in the ministry. I didn't realize it at first and I went along with whatever he ordered me to do ... stealing files, breaking into safes, passing on confidential data. After ... after a few months I started to fight it off. I ... the death of Elmer Jackson, the Senior Executive for the ministry ... I killed him."

Arthur clasped his son's shoulder. "You were under the Imperius Curse, Percy, that changes everything."

Percy nodded. "Logically I know that ... and when it came to light that I was under the curse, I wasn't punished. Malfoy escaped and they've heard no word of him at the ministry, or not enough to catch him. I was promoted soon after and given three-month leave with pay to recover. But I ... how do you recover from something like that?"

"You don't," Bill said quietly. "I killed a man working in Egypt. It wasn't actually me but I blame myself for it. We were lifting out artifacts from a pyramid that was collapsing. I told him to take the side way because it was faster and we could get more things out and ourselves out more quickly. There was an unknown trap that was set out in the side passage. Something about the movement of the collapse triggered it. He was speared through the wall and when the pyramid collapsed we found him. I can't help but think if I hadn't sent him out there but kept him with us ... it was a logical step though, and I know that if it hadn't been him it would have been someone else. But it doesn't stop the dreams."

Charlie nodded. "One of the trainers I started with in Romania got on the bad side of a Welsh-Green. She was a vicious beast and she beheaded him. He was showing me how to properly secure her. He'd been on the job for twenty-five years. Things like that stay with you, Perce, there's nothing you can do."

Percy managed a nod to them. "Thanks for that."

Molly stood up, tears pouring down her cheeks as she hurried around the table to cuddle her son to her breast. "Oh Percy, we're so happy you're back."

Arthur nodded. "We are but there's something you've failed to do that I'm going to insist on." Ginny's eyes met her father's in awe. It was rare to hear such a serious tone from her father. "I want you to apologize to your mother."

"And to Dad," Ginny added. Arthur glared at her but she shook her head. "No and to Dad. I've never seen Daddy so heartbroken, Percy."

Percy nodded. "I'm not sure the words I'm sorry exactly cut it here. Mum, Dad, I love you both so much and I'm sorry for everything that I did and said. I'm sorry for keeping you from my family these last three years. I love you."

Molly hugged him tighter and Arthur stood up too, moving around the table to take Percy's face in his hands. He kissed his forehead. "I love



you, too. You're a grown man now, so I guess grounding you isn't an option but you have some things to make up to us. Helping your mother when she needs it, or even when she doesn't, and I want you to show some respect to those around you. I also want you to apologize to Harry. He's a good man and he didn't deserve those things you said about him."

Percy nodded. "I will, I promise."

James stepped into the room then, dusting himself off. "Sorry to interrupt but they found Ellie."

All of the eyes in the room turned to him, but it was Ginny who spoke up. "Is she alive?"

James' eyes met hers and he shook his head, "She's gone. Dumbledore is calling an emergency Order meeting, immediately."

"What's the Order?" Percy asked.

James' eyes met his coldly. "Something you're not a part of because you chose not to be. Talk to Dumbledore about it from there."

"James ... can ... can Percy and Penny and the boys stay with us?"

James smiled warmly at Molly. "As long as he's grovelled enough to both you and Arthur to make up for his sins, of course he can."

"Mum, Penny and I have a home and we —"

"Don't you dare argue with me, Percy! We just got you back and I want to spend some time with my grandsons. The manor is safer anyway."

James grinned. "Give me twenty minutes to fix the wards and then come back over. With Bill's wedding tomorrow I'd think we'd all like to get this meeting over quickly."

Percy's eyes turned to Bill's in surprise. "You're getting married?"

Bill nodded. "I am. Her name's Fleur Delacour and our wedding has already been postponed twice. First, because Lexy was on bed rest and because there was so much going on, and then again recently because Fleur's parents couldn't get a portkey into Britain, as the wedding is no longer going to be in France. I'd really like you to be there, Perce."

Percy grinned. "You can count on it. Delacour? Wasn't she the Beauxbatons champion?"

Bill grinned. "The gorgeous blonde? Oh yeah."

Percy laughed. "Congratulations then."

"Thanks."

Arthur grinned and reached over to kiss Penny's cheek as he bounced Preston and Paul on his knees. "Now, let's get you guys settled so we can find out what's going on."

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It took a little over an hour for everyone to get settled at Grimmauld Place for the meeting. Alice had opted to stay behind with the children and with Percy and Penny as everyone else made themselves comfortable in the kitchen. Dumbledore stood up so that all eyes turned to him.

"As I'm sure most of you know by now, Ellie Douglas was killed in the line of duty. But it was during her work for the Order that she helped us discover an incredible secret. Severus has only recently learned a little more about the girl, Mira White and why Voldemort wants her. Ellie helped to take it one step further. Severus?" Dumbledore took a seat as Snape stood up.

"I ran into Ellie on her way home and she was practically shaking with horror. I brought her home with me and we talked about her assignment. I knew that she had been sent to spy on a small cottage in West Ham, where it was believed some Death Eaters were living. She was led there when she was searching for evidence on the

murders in East London.” Snape explained. “I knew about this cottage already but there is only so much I can pass on as being a Death Eater there’s a spell on me from giving away locations. It’s kind of like the Fidelius Charm, in that sense. Anyway, Ellie and I spoke; she had seen the small girl in the cottage. She wanted to know what the Dark Lord wanted with her. I told her that I didn’t know. She went home from there, and she seems to have been attacked somewhere along the way.”

James glared at him. “How are we supposed to know you didn’t sick someone on her?”

“James!” Lily hissed, grabbing his hand in hers.

“It’s an interesting point but considering Ellie and I have been involved romantically for the last year, I can’t see that happening. I loved her.”

Sirius snorted. “Like you’re even capable of such an emotion.”

“Will you three stop acting like school children?” Lexy demanded. “There are more important things at stake here!”

James shrugged. “Sorry, so what did you find out about Mira then?”

Snape licked his lips before he spoke. “She’s a seer.”

The room was silent for a moment until Ginny spoke up.

“A seer? But I thought she was a muggle?”

“We thought she was but apparently, she’s got some magic in her. I’d say she’s definitely a witch and a seer.”

Lily leaned back in her chair, rubbing a hand over her large stomach to try to calm the baby who was kicking up a storm. “What would Voldemort want with a seer?”

Dumbledore spoke up now. “We believe that she’s seen something and Voldemort was made aware of it. Possibly another prophecy or

maybe something entirely different, we just don't know."

"What we do know is that she doesn't remember. The Dark Lord is getting frustrated with her as she doesn't remember what it is she saw and when he uses Legilimency on her all he can see of it is flashes, he can't make out the pieces." Snape explained.

"So he's trying to figure out the puzzle," Harry replied. "But if she can't remember what she saw what will he do to her?"

"I'd say he'll try to kill her," Kingsley replied. "And we're not going to let that happen. We need to find her and get her out of there, fast."

Snape nodded. "The only thing I know about what she saw is that it somehow connects to Miss Weasley and the Chamber of Secrets."

Ginny gulped. "What do you mean by that?"

Snape shrugged, his eyes penetrating into hers. "I have no idea. But that's the only thing I know about it. However, unless Mira remembers what she saw, you don't have to worry because the Dark Lord doesn't have any idea either."

"So for now she's safe," Kingsley replied.

Ginny nodded and cuddled back into Harry's arms, she could feel his heart beating against her back. "Yeah, safe."

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The next day was chaotic as everyone tried to get ready for the wedding that was taking place in the backyard of the Burrow. Everyone was bustling around getting flowers and tables and making the arch and everything look perfect. Finally, by two o'clock it was time for the ceremony to start.

Harry sat next to James and Hermione as he watched Charlie, Percy, Fred, George, and Ron stand up at the front as Bill walked towards them with Molly and Arthur on either side. The music changed and Fleur's bridesmaids made their way forward. Gabrielle Delacour,

Ginny, and two French women named Monique and Paige made their way in gold dresses.

Harry's mouth dropped open as he looked at Ginny. He had never seen her in such a colour before and it suited her wonderfully. The colour set off her skin tone and her gorgeous red hair was pinned up in a French twist. The dress was formfitting and long satin held together by a tie around her neck. She looked beautiful. She smiled at him before she took her place up at the altar.

When the music changed, the entire audience went quiet. Fleur looked exquisite in her white dress with lavender flowers. Her golden blonde hair flowed over her shoulders in waves and the pearl veil and crown she wore made her look like royalty. Bill was staring at her in awe and he kissed her fingers when she stepped up next to him.

"I love you." He said loudly and clearly before the preacher even began.

Fleur smiled. "I love you too."

Harry listened as the preacher told them to say their vows and connect their wands, and then finally to kiss. When the ceremony ended and pictures were done being snapped at every turn. Harry pulled Ginny into his arms.

"You look amazing."

She smiled and kissed him softly. "I'm glad you approve. I wasn't sure how I would look in gold at first."

"Incredible. I think gold may be my favourite colour on you."

Her eyes twinkled in amusement as if she knew a secret that he didn't. "Good to know."

Arthur stepped up next to them. "Sorry to interrupt, but I wanted to ask you, honey, before someone else gets the chance. Ginny, I was wondering if I could have the first dance."

Ginny grinned and stood on her toes to kiss her father's cheek. "Of course, Daddy."

He grinned and smiled at her. "You grow more beautiful every day. Take care of my baby, Harry."

Harry smiled. "I'll do my best, when she lets me."

"Ooh, good answer, Mr. Potter." Ginny murmured as her father headed in another direction.

Harry shrugged. "Well, I know how your mind works, usually."

She laughed and kissed him again. "Come on; let's go join the celebration."

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Ron held Hermione close as they danced to the music. It was getting late and he was tired of dancing but he didn't want to disappoint her. He had, after all, lost his chance in giving her a great night of dancing at the Yule Ball. He leaned down and kissed her softly. She smiled against his lips.

"What?"

"Nothing, I just can't get over how lucky I am to have you."

She smiled up at him, her arms resting on his shoulders. "Sometimes, Ron, you really surprise me." She kissed him again. "I love you."

Ron nodded. "I love you too. I'm glad that you're here with me today, with everything that happened yesterday with Percy ... I need you."

"You have me. All you have to do is say the word."

"Mione?" He asked, his voice soft as he stared into her eyes. She was giving him that look, that look of hers that turned his legs to jelly. It was a simple look really, one that made her eyes twinkle in happiness and the corners of her mouth twitch up in amusement, but

it drove him crazy. Almost as crazy as when she put her hands on her hips and her eyes lit on fire as she glared at him. Hermione never looked more beautiful then she did when she was angry.

“Hmm?”

“If I told you that I wanted to make love to you again, what would you say?”

Hermione smiled up at him, her eyes darkening in desire. “I’d say it’s a pretty good idea.”

Ron made a growling noise in his throat and kissed her deeply. “Let’s go then.”

Hermione laughed as he dragged her off the dance floor, she knew she was in for a good evening.

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Charlie held Emma in his arms and he grinned in amusement as he watched his youngest brother dragging his girlfriend off the dance floor. “You think he’d be a bit more subtle about it?”

Emma laughed. “He’s seventeen, I don’t think subtle is the right word. Those two are crazy in love even though they bicker like crazy. It’s called raging hormones.”

“Like an old married couple, more like it.”

She smiled. “Yeah, that does explain them.”

Charlie nodded, kissing her softly. “What about you?”

Emma gave him a puzzled look. “What do you mean what about me?”

He shrugged. “Well, I think we both know this relationship has turned into a hell of a lot more then just sex.” When she nodded he sighed. “Do you ever see us as an old married couple?”

She smiled. "Bickering at each other on a constant basis and making love on the kitchen floor? It has crossed my mind."

He grinned and his lips were so close to hers she could feel his breath. "Emma ... I'm in love with you and it scares me to death."

She nodded, her arms tightening around his neck. "I know the feeling."

"So are we going to get married, or what?"

Her eyebrow rose questionably. "Not with that proposal we aren't."

Charlie rolled his eyes and grinned sheepishly. "Emma, will you marry me?"

She grinned and kissed him. "Most definitely."

He laughed and spun her around into his arms before he used a Sonorous charm on himself. "Hey everyone, Emma and I are getting married!"

There were loud cheers from the crowd and then he scooped her up and hurried into the house, not waiting for anyone to come over and congratulate the new couple.

"Put me down, you fool!"

He grinned. "Oh, no, honey, you're stuck with me now."

When the bedroom door slammed behind him and he dropped her down onto his old bed, she grinned up at him. "Merlin only knows why I love you."

He wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "Too late now." Then he crushed his mouth to hers.

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After the wedding and once Bill and Fleur headed off to their honeymoon in Martinique, everyone was buzzing with the fact that Charlie and Emma were engaged. But by the next morning, talk returned to Mira and what to do about getting her away from Voldemort as soon as possible.

Everyone was busy working on trying to find a way to discover the location of Mira, so by the time Ginny's sixteenth birthday came along, everyone was ready for a break. It wasn't much, just family and friends over for dinner and cake and presents. But it was fun and it was an opportunity for her to feel girly and important. Sweet sixteen was an important age after all and she definitely had big plans for her birthday.

Now that she had spent her day with friends and family, opening gifts and laughing, she was ready for the thing that she had been planning since the night she had talked with her mum.

Ginny stood in front of the beautiful ornate full-length mirror and took a deep breath. *Do I look any different?* She wondered to herself. Today she had turned sixteen years old and she was a woman in almost every way. Her eyes fell to the necklace that she wore around her throat. Yes, she had grown.

Harry had pulled her aside earlier that evening to give her the necklace. It was a beautiful fourteen-karat thin gold corded chain with a ruby the size of a snitch dangling from it. She had gasped at the sight of it, had even protested meekly but yet she had been drawn to the necklace. It was exquisite. It wasn't heavy around the neck but fit just right, nestled between her breasts. He had told her that it offered protection to her and she promised to wear it always. It felt right to wear it as it rested next to her heart.

Now she stood in front of the mirror watching as the light reflected off of the ruby. She closed her hand around it and took a better look at herself. Emma had told her last year that she would grow up quickly in a physical sense and she really had. Ginny knew that she was done growing now, she was very happy with how she had turned out.

She now stood 5'5, only slightly taller than her mother, but her height

was alright. Her bright red hair hung mid-back and the natural blonde and dark red highlights flashed in the light against the red of her hair. It was wavy and curled towards the bottom and the layers that she had become accustomed to and adored since they made her look older, framed her face. Her body was alabaster coloured with sporadic freckles. She was thankful that she wasn't completely covered in freckles like Ron and Charlie. She had, in almost every sense, from the curvaceous sway of her hips to her round, firm breasts, become a woman.

Her big chocolate brown eyes stared back at her in the mirror as she applied a bit of makeup to her face, accenting her eyes and trying to hide the sprinkle of freckles on her nose. She wiggled her toes next, grinning at the bright pink polish that she had applied to them earlier that evening. She wanted to look perfect. She wanted to look seductive. She wanted ... well *him*. She sprayed herself in her scent, knowing that she already smelt like spring and strawberries from the luxurious bubble bath that she had treated herself to only half an hour before.

She untied her fuzzy blue bathrobe and slipped into cream coloured silk underwear with a garter and a matching strapless bra that she had bought in New York. She stared at herself in the mirror for a moment and smiled. Harry's mouth was going to drop when he saw her. She was making sure of it. She grabbed the gold coloured nightgown that Emma had picked out for her. She had never worn it yet. It cut off dangerously low beneath her thighs and had next to no back. Two thin corded straps held it up and it cut low in the front, a lace border along her breast continuing from where the silk stopped. She knew when she glanced in the mirror that she looked incredible, because she certainly felt it.

She stepped into matching heels, mostly because she needed shoes to walk in and these made her legs look amazing. She wrapped herself up in Harry's invisibility cloak; she had stolen it from his trunk the day before.

She was ready.

Ginny slowly made her way down the hall of the manor to Harry's

bedroom. She knew that his room still had a silencing charm around it but when she stepped inside she still did a locking charm and another silencing charm. She definitely did not want to be interrupted.

Harry was sleeping, his legs and arms spread wide as he hogged most of the bed. He wore nothing except black boxers and she admired him for a moment. He had really grown up in the last year. He still worked out on a regular basis with James and now Ron and Draco had joined in. It definitely wasn't hurting them, either. Harry now stood 6'2 and while he was still lanky, he had definitely grown out of the skinny age. His chest was broad, well defined, and muscular. She really couldn't complain about the rest of him either. He was, in a word, gorgeous.

Ginny took a deep breath before she pulled the invisibility cloak over her head and tucked it back into his trunk. Then she closed her eyes and worked on connecting with his mind. She wanted him to see her before he knew that she was in the room.

*"Harry, wake up,"* she said mentally. She could feel his body slowing beginning to wake even as he struggled to stay in dreamland. *"Harry, open your eyes. I've got a surprise for you."*

*"Tired... sleep now, Gin,"* he murmured back with his mind making her smile.

*"No sleep, Harry, wake up. Open up those beautiful green eyes and see who's here in front of you."*

He blinked awake and she smiled at him from where she now sat on the edge of his bed. He blinked again and then she watched in fascination as his Adam's apple began to bob. "Gin?" He croaked.

She smiled and stood up, the silk brushing against her thighs and causing Harry to gulp before his mouth fell open. His eyes travelled up her body and then back down again. When his eyes met hers again, his mouth was still open wide.

"Well, that's almost the reaction I was going for," she murmured.

Harry closed his mouth and then he opened it again. He didn't know how to comment. She looked ... *amazing*. His body reacted instantly as his eyes travelled down her legs and then back up. The nightgown clung to every curve. She had a look on her face that told him she knew exactly how she looked, and exactly what she was doing to him.

"Are you trying to kill me?" He murmured, reaching out to put his glasses on which only made her look even better.

She smiled and knelt down onto the bed. "That's definitely not my plan." She slid her hands up his chest and over his shoulders. "I had other ideas." She leaned in and nipped at his ear, sucking the lobe into her mouth, and he moaned.

"Ginny," he murmured, his hands slipping around her waist and into her hair. "Merlin, you look beautiful."

Ginny smiled and pulled back to look into his eyes. "I feel beautiful. I feel incredible. I want to feel a lot more than that."

His eyebrow rose slightly. "Meaning?"

She straddled him on the bed and kissed him deeply. "Well, lately I've been having all of these erotic dreams about you and me ... in them your hands have been all over my body and my hands have definitely been all over yours."

He gulped again as he ran his hand along her waist, the silk moving slightly beneath his palm. "These uh ... these dreams you've been having ... when I was touching you, what were you wearing?"

She grinned wickedly now and nipped at his stubbly chin. "I wasn't wearing anything, and neither were you."

He groaned and his hands dragged up her back and into her hair. "Ginny ..."

"I want you, Harry," she whispered against his mouth. "I want you more than anything. I'm tired of waiting. I'm so ... I'm so ready for us to be together."

Harry cupped her face in his hands and kissed her softly. "Are you sure, Gin? 'Cause please, you have to be sure, I need you to be sure."

She smiled and ran a finger down the centre of his chest to tap gently at his navel. "I'm sure. Don't you think we've waited long enough?"

"Ages. Eons. Lifetimes." He murmured as he kissed her softly. He took her hand in his and nibbled gently on her fingers.

"Harry," she murmured.

He grinned and gripped her hips, positioning her a bit more comfortably in his lap. "What? I've been waiting for this moment my whole life and I want to make it as perfect as you. Alright?"

She smiled at him. "That's very alright."

Harry continued to nibble at her fingers for a moment until he took her arms and placed them around his neck. Then his hands slid around her waist and down her soft legs to the heels she wore. He carefully untied the straps and slipped them off of her feet, dropping them onto the floor with a clunk. Ginny's hands clasped together behind his neck as he began to stroke her heel and the arch of her foot with his hands. He moved her off of his lap and laid her down on her back on the bed next to him and then his hands began to stroke over her legs again.

He lifted her right foot and began to plant small kisses along the arch, his tongue teasing until she whimpered so he moved to her left foot. He used his tongue and his lips to travel up her legs until he came to the bottom of the nightgown where no other skin was exposed.

"You look amazing," he murmured as he slid his hands over the silk to stroke over her body through the nightgown. "You feel even better."

She smiled up at him, pulling him down to kiss him softly. Their mouths met for a few moments, enjoying nothing but the soft kisses. His taste was good and normal and he tasted like Harry, salty and

rich and a little bit like chocolate. Her hands roamed over his chest as his mouth met hers over and over, taking the kisses deeper until she was drowning in his taste, his texture, in him. He groaned when he felt his heart rate speed up and as her hands roamed over his skin. He wanted it to be perfect but if she wasn't careful he wasn't going to last long. He pulled away to trail kisses down her neck. He stopped for a moment when he came to the necklace.

"This looks wonderful on you."

"I love it, Harry."

He smiled at her and kissed her softly. "I know."

He slid his hands down her sides until he came to the bottom of the silk and then he slowly began to inch it upwards, pulling it up over her head and tossing it aside. His mouth dropped open instantly when he looked down at her.

"Merlin ..." he murmured as he gently ran his hand over the cream coloured silk. "Where did you get this outfit?"

She laughed softly as her stomach did flip-flops at the look of pure desire in his eyes. "I bought it in New York. Do you like it?"

She shivered under his touch as he fingered the edge of the garter. "Gin, like is not the appropriate word here."

He just stared at her for a minute. His heart was pounding in his chest and even while his brain was screaming that he was going to mess this up somehow his heart was telling him that he knew what to do. He knew where to touch and where to kiss and he knew how to make love with her.

He lowered his head to kiss the areas where her skin was exposed and she gasped. She knew that he had done this before, kissing her skin and making her burn, but this time it seemed different. This time she knew that it was going to go that extra step further into the unknown. She arched under his mouth as he found the clasps on the garter and unhooked them. She grinned, *bonus points*, she hadn't

thought that he would be able to untie it. He slipped it off and then moved his calloused hands up her ribcage to stroke the skin just under her bra. Her head fell back in pleasure and she moaned. His hands just felt so good.

She tasted amazing and smelt incredible. He was lost in the scent of spring and strawberries as he trailed his tongue over her ribcage and followed with his hands. He never wanted to stop touching her, kissing her. He never wanted this moment to end even as he ached for her. Her soft hands clawed at his back as he nibbled just under her bra, basking in the scent of his Ginny.

Ginny fisted her hands in his hair as his lips trailed over her stomach and his tongue danced around her bellybutton ring. Everything that she had ever imagined, it hadn't been like this ... he felt amazing. She pulled him back up to her lips and her hands slid down his chest, brushing through the trail of dark hair that was around his naval.

"Harry," she murmured against his lips, wanting to touch him like he was touching her.

He shook his head and nipped at her collarbone. "Nuh-uh, you've had your turn Gin, plenty of times if I recall. This time ... it's my turn to make you scream."

She nodded meekly even as the heat was building up inside of her and he had barely done anything. A soft kiss here, a brush of skin there yet she felt like she was burning alive. When his hands slid around to unclasp her bra she simply gasped as the air kissed her skin. When his mouth began to replace his hands she simply moaned and murmured his name. Her body was definitely building up to something, and it wasn't just the steam and the pleasure, her power was building inside of her and she knew what she needed. What she wanted. What she desired.

"Harry, I need ... I need." She groaned, arching under his lips and grabbing for his hands. When she grabbed hold of his hands, he felt the shock.

All he could do was nod as her power ripped through him, he moaned

out loud. He could feel everything that she was feeling as the power crackled around them. He knew what she needed, what she wanted. All of the pleasure he was giving her roared through his body and he was on fire. The power blurred around them, the colours exploding from every inch of contact they made. It was explosive and burned hot through them.

He finished undressing her and used his lips everywhere he could reach. She was arching and crying out to him and he could feel the magic inside of him, inside of them both, striving to come alive, to reach out and to explode. His hands and lips moved lower and lower until she was crying out as the power crackled around them. Her hands were running down his back and then all of their clothes were on the floor and his lips were meeting hers.

"I love you," he whispered as she cried out his name.

She nodded and her hands fisted in his hair as she wrapped her legs around him. "I love you, too."

Then they were joined together, exploring a new side of their love.

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Harry's breathing had finally slowed down as he managed to turn and grin down at Ginny. She was cuddled against him, her head resting over his heart and the blankets wrapped up around her. He felt incredible and surprisingly relaxed. He lifted his head a bit to kiss the top of her head.

"Gin?"

"That was amazing," she murmured.

He laughed and turned on his side so that he could kiss her deeply. "I love you."

"I love you too. I think this was a great birthday present, the best one ever."



“Hmm,” he murmured. “You said the same thing last year. Now I’m really in trouble if, I’ve got to top this one.”

She laughed and rolled over, kissing him again. “You don’t have to top anything. It was all so incredible. The magic of it.”

“Gin, the way your magic rips through me like that ... it’s so intense and I think I’m used to it, but then it surprises me again. Like tonight, you needed to connect with me in the magical sense. I could feel it bubbling in you, just under the surface. You needed it and I think I did too. I needed to feel our power join just as much as well ... us.”

Ginny smiled and snuggled closer to him. “When I share my magic with you I feel complete in some way — I feel more alive and I feel more sure of myself. Emma warned me that I would need to share my magic with you in those intense moments, the feeling is sexual almost as much as it is powerful.”

Harry nodded. “Yeah, I know.” He grinned to himself and licked his lips. “Merlin, though, we have got to get you back into those knickers. I thought I was going to die when I pulled back the silk and found that.”

She laughed and grinned when his hand slid under the covers to stroke over her dragon. “Hmm, I’m glad you enjoyed them. I had fun picking them out.”

He smiled and nibbled gently at her neck. “Oh, I really enjoyed them.”

“Good, because I have them in a large variety of styles and colours.”

He groaned and she giggled. His hand stroked over her body and she moaned, moving towards him. “Are you tired, Gin?”

“I thought ... well, I mean ... I had heard that guys couldn’t ... mmm.” She moaned as his hands continued to roam over her skin.

Harry shrugged. “Well, I’m not like other guys now am I?”

All she could do was sigh in pleasure as she wrapped her arms

around him and they made love all over again.

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Harry woke up the next morning with Ginny wrapped around him. It felt good to be here, lying with her in his arms. They had made love three times and then had fallen asleep in each other's arms. He had never felt more incredible in his life. He looked over at the clock by his bed and sighed. It was almost ten in the morning. He kissed her softly on the lips and she groaned, stretching a bit and then cuddling closer. He grinned.

"Ginny, wake up." He murmured, his lips trailing down her neck.

She shook her head no and cuddled closer. "Uh-uh."

He laughed and kissed her fully on the lips, grinning when she responded. "Mmm, there you are," he murmured against her lips.

She grinned up at him. "What time is it?"

"After ten, how did you get in here last night anyway?" He asked. "Without being caught, I mean?"

Ginny grinned and turned so that she could stretch luxuriously in the bed. "I borrowed your invisibility cloak ahead of time."

Harry's eyebrow rose in surprise. "Just how long have you been planning this?"

"Since about June," she giggled as his mouth fell open. She leaned over him, her hair falling around her face as she kissed him softly, moaning as his hands slid up to cup her gently. "Is that alright with you?"

He nodded and kissed her again. "It is very alright with me. That means ... have you purposely been driving me crazy all summer?" When she grinned at him he smirked. "Minx. But I think you better get back to your own room before they come looking for us."

She sighed. "Yeah." She slid out of bed and Harry grinned in appreciation as she pulled the nightgown over her head and then picked up her undergarments and her heels. She was so beautiful. "I'll need to borrow the cloak again."

He nodded. "Sure." He stood up and pulled a pair of jeans on, not bothering with the snap and he pulled her close for a long deep kiss. His hands slid around to cup her bottom and she giggled.

"Harry!"

"Mmm, I don't want you to go."

She grinned. "I've got to. I'll see you later."

She unlocked the door wandlessly just as the door opened and she froze in place. Harry threw the cloak over her but not before James and Sirius noticed the flash. She hurried out of the room and Harry gulped as Sirius' eyes darkened. His eyes went to the bed and even though Harry had cleaned up the blood the night before he wondered if he could see it.

"Um, morning Da, Uncle Sirius, this is uh ... hi."

"Was that just Ginny?" Sirius growled. "I mean, did you two finally ...?"

Harry blushed and nodded. "She uh ... well, she kind of showed up here last night."

James grinned. "She seduced you?"

"Well, she ... she had on this silk nightgown thing and these high heels that made her legs look ... well, come on, give me a break! We've been dating for two years."

"You have looked like you were going to explode at times," James replied. "Right Sirius? You've said so yourself; the sexual tension between those two was getting a bit on the heavy side. I think my son has been living in cold showers."

Sirius nodded, but his eyes were still dark as he watched Harry slip his hands into his pockets. "Yeah, I've noticed and I mean I'm happy for you, finally getting laid and all, it's good for you but ... damn it, Harry, if you hurt her I'll kill you!" He growled, his voice taking on a hint of danger.

James patted his friend on the back. "Now, now Padfoot, don't threaten my son because he finally got to shag the woman he's in love with." Harry sighed in relief and James grinned wickedly. "It will be much more fun to let Ginny's brothers have a go at him first."

Harry paled a bit. "What did I do to deserve this? Ginny was obviously not hurt in anyway when she left here!"

James grinned and patted his son on the back. "We're just teasing, Harry, mostly. We love Ginny a lot and Sirius especially views her as someone very important to him. We just want to make sure that you're careful and that you don't hurt her."

"I'm pretty good at a castration charm," Sirius piped up, his eyes twinkling in amusement.

James rolled his eyes. "Ignore him. How are you?"

He shrugged. "Well, I did feel pretty good."

James laughed. "Yeah I bet. Padfoot, go play with your wife for a while. I think I changed my mind about you being here. It doesn't look safe for my son."

Sirius shrugged and glared at Harry again. "Remember what I said."

He left the room, closing the door behind him.

"What's up, Da?"

"It's been a little over a week since you turned seventeen and I haven't heard any complaints yet. I thought it was time we talked. Lily told me what happened when we all left to look for Ellie." James

replied, taking a seat in one of the armchairs in the corner.

"I'm an adult now, Da."

"Yes, you are." James replied. "And I know that you want to help more in the Order now, something that I promised to allow you to do, yet you haven't been pushing me about it. I'll admit, I've wondered why that is."

Harry shrugged. "I was waiting for the right moment, I suppose."

James nodded. "The right moment ... the horcruxes?"

Harry nodded. "That's what I should be doing and you know it. The prophecy was made about me. I'm the one that has to defeat Voldemort and how am I supposed to go up against him when I haven't had any experience in any of his traps or ploys that he's set up?"

"It's a good point. I've been thinking about it actually since Sirius, Frank, and I found the cup."

"Really?" Harry asked, taking a seat on his bed as his eyes met his father's.

"Yes, really. You are an adult now and with that comes certain responsibilities. You're right you need to get in on the horcrux hunt." James replied. "You're a member of the Order now, Harry, and I'd say it's about time you started acting like it. You've got full status now. You're going to be allowed to come out on missions and assignments but you have to go to school. Finishing your N.E.W.T.s is important; no matter how inconvenient it sounds. Understand?"

Harry nodded. "Completely."

James grinned. "Good. You've got a whole new life starting ahead of you, a new beginning. I think you started that last night. A new beginning as an adult, and one with a war to fight at that. It's going to be a long road ahead, Harry, and it scares me to know that I'm putting you out on it. But I believe that you can do it. Do you?"

Harry nodded at his father, closing his eyes. "I know it can handle it, Da, the question is if I will survive it."

"You will. A new beginning with growing power; you've got the power Harry and now your chance is beginning for you to use it. The question is then, are you ready for it?"

"Yes." Harry answered simply and he knew that he was, in every way that he could be for such a task. He was ready for the beginning of his new life as an adult and for the war. There was nothing that could tell him otherwise. It was time for a new beginning and this time, Voldemort was going down.

**AN: This story is seriously getting long so I have decided to start a sequel, which will be Harry's 7th year, the war with Voldemort, and a bit of Post-Hogwarts. It will be titled *A New Beginning* and I will have the first chapter up as soon as possible. Thanks to everyone who has been reading this story — you guys rock!!**

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